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THE PERSONALITY OF GOD

BY

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Those acquainted with the Reverend H. H. Guthrie, Jr., Professor of the Old Testament at the Episcopal Theological School, will recognize my great dependence on his lectures for most of the material in chapter 2. In fact, this whole undertaking owes its origin to his stimulating presentation of the Old Testament, and I have him as my adviser to thank for considerable assistance and encouragement.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Theological debate has been a constant feature of the life of the Church, but the issue in the debate has changed in response to the changing questions of men. It is doubtful, for example, whether the doctrine of God has been the subject of as much controversy as it is today since the Councils of the patristic age decided the form of trinitarian theology. The terms in which the questions are asked are no longer those of Plato, but our problem is essentially that which confronts every age; we have to articulate, in whatever categories we are given, the relationship of God to the world, without speaking as though either were included without remainder in the other.

The issue is complicated, however, by the fact that, in our time, the terms in which the question is asked and must be answered, be they derived from philosophy or from science, are predominantly experiential. Titles such as "An empirical placing of theological phrases"¹ and "Christianity and the problem of existence"², while they show that there are those still willing to discuss theology, also make it very clear

¹Ramsey, I.T.: Religious Language; an Empirical Placing of Theological Phrases (London, S.C.M. Press, 1957)

²Tillich, Paul: Christianity and the Problem of Existence (Washington, Henderson, 1951)

that the existentialist and positivist commitment to experience has left an indelible mark on the theological enterprise.

The fact that our task is at once both the same as and different from that of other ages is itself the clue to the solution of that problem we have mentioned. It suggests that where possible we ~~have~~, Like the original Hermes on his voyages between the gods and men, to journey between the wisdom of our theological tradition and the wisdom of our time, not staying so long with the one that we forget the other, caring always for the integrity of both. Not, of course, that this has always to be a self-conscious effort; most of the time the sensitive man lives in just this tension. The danger is rather that we may become so accustomed to this tension that we may fail to notice the opportunities which appear from time to time for its resolution.

We have been given just such an opportunity. There are many comings and goings, but it is questionable whether the many Hermes' of our time are listening carefully enough to the messages they are given at both ends of their journeys. Many theologians, it must fairly be stated, have already taken issue with the failure of some modern interpreters to be fair to the theological tradition of the Church. I shall mention two examples, the most pertinent to the aim of this thesis, Dr. Robinson's Honest to God¹ and the "God Who Acts" school,

¹Robinson, John A.T.: Honest to God (London, S.C.M. Press, 1963)

a central figure of which is G. Ernest Wright.¹

The following seems a fair assessment of the situation represented by the publication of Honest to God:

His [Dr. Robinson's] attempt to be honest to God is so dishonest to the God of, for example, Athanasius or the fourth century Cappadocian writers or of Thomas Aquinas, let alone Augustine or, again, to the God of the author of the Cloud of Unknowing or, say, to the God who is worshipped in and through the shape of the Orthodox liturgy, that it is high time that we were confronted by an explosive reminder of the need to 'get our theism right'.²

Jenkins' point in that essay is that the 'scandalous poverty of much modern theism' cannot be remedied without due attention to the insights, at least as much as the imagery, of traditional theology.

Concerning the "God Who Acts" school, it has been well pointed out by James Barr³ that the biblical material by no means bears out the overwhelming emphasis given to the theme of God's activity in human history by Wright and others.

¹see Wright, G.E.: God Who Acts; Biblical Theology as Recital (London, S.C.M. Press, 1952)

²Jenkins, D.E.: "Concerning Theism", in The Honest to God Debate (ed. Edwards, D.L., London, S.C.M. Press, 1963)

³Barr, James: "Revelation through History in the Old Testament and in Modern Theology", in Interpretation for April, 1963, reprinted in New Theology Number 1 (ed. Marty, M.E. and Peerman, D.G.: New York, Macmillan, 1964). The problems involved in asserting a faith in "God Who Acts" in our age are well described by Gilkey, Langdon: "Cosmology, Ontology and the Travail of Biblical Language" in Journal of Religion, July 1962 and by Dilley, F.B., "Does the God Who Acts Really Act?" in Anglican Theological Review, Jan., 1965.

Quite apart from the question whether it is not somewhat anachronistic to ascribe to the biblical writers an 'idea of God', let alone an idea of 'history', it is clear that there are other motifs, such as God's communication with his chosen servants, which are no less prominent in the bible. In the recognition that the bible does not enunciate an 'idea of God', I shall endeavour to suggest that the only modern concept which satisfactorily includes all the disparate themes of the bible is 'personality', the personality of God.

Even, however, if there are professional theologians sensitive to any lack of attention to the tradition, there are at least as many questions which could be raised about the amount of ~~attention~~ paid by modern theologians to the thought of their contemporaries in secular disciplines. It would be depressing, for example, to think that the Copernican revolution (Copernicus died in 1543) is as much the issue of our intellectual world as the frequent references to it by Robinson might lead one to suppose.¹ Fortunately, there is some evidence that the intervening four centuries have seen revolutions no less revolutionary than that in astronomy.

Yet Copernicus is by no means irrelevant; he represents the first major breakthrough in empirical science, that branch of knowledge responsible for the major human feats of discovery in our time. It is the employment and presuppositions of

¹op. cit. pp. 11-13, 45, 64-67.

scientific method which have brought about not only the unprecedented increase in our understanding of the physical world and in our technological achievement, but also an entirely new insight into the nature of human personality. Since Descartes, it has been the continuous hope of philosophers to describe the person within the categories of experience, and therefore outside the categories of scholastic philosophy with its mind-body dualism. That development, described in chapter 4, has been associated more recently with new discoveries about the human personality arrived at by empirical methods through the work of clinical and experimental psychologists.

Not very much will be said here about the experimental work that has been done.¹ The fact that it has received less publicity than the clinical observations is evidence that it has up to this point not had the dramatic effect on our self-understanding which was brought about by the work of Freud and his successors, which we shall be examining more closely in chapter 5. This is not to say that the results of experimental research are not potentially every bit as far-reaching. Pavlov's famous experiments were the early stages of an enterprise which will ultimately respect no boundaries, and since the second world war the use of mathematical models of human behaviour and the simulation of various features of it by means

¹Some impression of the immense volume of experimental and mathematical research, and a bibliography, may be seen in Stevens, S.S.: Handbook of Experimental Psychology (New York, Wiley, 1951) and Luce, R.D.: Handbook of Mathematical Psychology (New York, Wiley, 1963): 3 vols.

of computers have opened up promising avenues of research. It remains true, though, that it is the exploration of the human unconscious in clinical situations, the discoveries of the major psychic mechanisms and the means used for their control and direction, ~~which~~ have thus far had the greatest impact. Immense possibilities have been brought to light, both of healing and insight. The fact that these discoveries aroused such a storm of opposition in their early years is itself a strong indication of their importance in destroying one of our most keenly defended superstitions, the mystery of personality.

It must not be supposed, however, that we are going to relate the results of contemporary inquiry in the fields of philosophy and psychology to a static and timeless theological tradition. Methods of historical research have not been unaffected by the advance of science, and the application of these methods to the remains of the Judaeo-Christian past have yielded results no less remarkable.¹ The chapter which follows makes use of some of them in tracing the ~~biblical~~ witness concerning the personality of God. It is indeed when we have examined that witness, and then, in chapter 3, seen the difficulty experienced by two of our contemporary theologians in dealing with that witness, that we ~~shall~~ see the need we have

¹The development of our present concern for history, and the significance of that concern for the theological undertaking are examined in Roberts, T.A.: History and Christian Apologetic (London, S.P.C.K., 1960)

of insight from modern secular disciplines if we are to make any attempt at presenting that witness in our time.

That enterprise, the relating of the biblical witness concerning a personal God to our present understanding of human personality, is in my judgment new only in its self-consciousness. If the doctrine of God propounded by any of the great thinkers of Christian history were examined, which would be necessary to make this study complete, we should, I believe, discover a relationship in every case between the terms in which they expressed themselves about God and the idea of personality prevalent in the world-view of their contemporaries.

It may be said that, in speaking of the "Personality of God", I have given to that relationship an undue emphasis. The ambiguity of "personality" - it means both "being personal" and, more commonly, the "nature, disposition or character" of a person - this ambiguity is indeed one which I wish to exploit precisely because that ambiguity expresses very well the point I wish to make about our contemporary self-understanding: for us now, it is in our character, our nature, our 'selves' newly understood, that our personal identity, our being personal, is discovered. To be personal, rather than impersonal, is to have those qualities which form a part of personality, which, that is, are properly applied to people rather than to things or forces or notions. Put another way, it will be my con-

tention that for it to be true that God is personal, it is both necessary and sufficient that it also be true to say that God has a personality.

In conclusion, we must see those who are advocating the use of other than personal language about God in a proper perspective. "What is striking about Dr. Robinson," remarks Mr. MacIntyre, "is first and foremost that he is an atheist."¹ That, I am sure, is not true. What is true, however, is that had Robinson succeeded in dissociating himself from a personal God theology as radically as he frequently claims,² he would indeed, by the standards of the mainstream of Christianity, be an atheist. Fortunately, for those who are more concerned for the Bishop's Christianity than for his consistency, he does not succeed. It turns out that the terms substituted for those of a personal God, such as Ground of Being, and Grace, are, despite the disclaimers, described in highly personal terms.³

It would be my hope that the elucidation of the traditional Christian affirmation of a personal God which follows might help to explain why it is that substituting other ways

¹MacIntyre, Alasdair; "God and the Theologians" in The Honest to God Debate, p. 215 (reprinted from Encounter of September, 1963)

²op. cit. pp. 48-50, the clearest instance; also pp. 39-40, 128-132: cf. also Honest to God Debate, pp. 228-231.

³op. cit. p. 81: see also the discussion of this point by Jenkins, op. cit. pp. 201-202.

of talking about God, even if those other ways are presented as "clarification" or "re-interpretation for our age", must involve a radical discontinuity with the tradition, and so atheism in the last resort. This explanation may do something towards the alleviation of the "poverty of modern theism" even if only a little. If so, those who would regard atheism, for themselves, as a bankrupt choice, may not find it so necessary to join the rush to dig for the fake-gold of a third alternative.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PERSONAL GOD OF THE BIBLE

The bible knows nothing of atheism. In the bible, when men apostatize from the true God, they do so in favour of a false one, or else by their deplorable treatment of the poor and outcast depart from the torah of God.¹ So too, when the men of the bible doubt, they may doubt God's goodness or his faithfulness or his wisdom or his presence, or they may become convinced that he is no longer active in their lives,² but nowhere do they doubt his existence.³ The issue for the biblical writers is always who is the true God and what are his concerns. With no interest in the scientific and philo-

¹Torah, usually translated "law", refers more precisely to God's "ways"; like other words we shall examine, its original application is to a feature of political life, in this case to the "ways" of an emperor, which would be binding on all his subject peoples.

²Such doubt is expressed in Psalm 22:1, used as Jesus' "cry of dereliction" (Matt. 27:46); cf. also Job 26-32.

³Atheism in the modern sense requires, in addition to the Judaeo-Christian tradition's persistent refusal to allow God to be identified with any terrestrial substance (the Second Commandment, Exod. 20:4-5), a scientific and philosophical sophistication capable of ridding men of their sense of dependency and awe. That atheism in the ancient world meant something quite different is illustrated by the fact that Polycarp and his persecutors could call each other atheists, though from our point of view the charge was true of neither. (See "Atheism" in Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, ed. Cross, F.L.; London, Oxford University Press, 1957, p. 100) Similarly, the "fools who say in their heart, 'There is no God'" (Pss. 14:1, 53:1) are shown, as the psalms proceed, to have forsaken the true God and his ways by becoming "corrupt and abominable in their works."

sophical issues which have led some to deny the very existence of God, the biblical writers accept the prevailing assumption of their time that there was a supernatural world on which the natural world depended. What distinguished Israel from her near-eastern neighbours was her view of how that supernatural world was to be described and, more important, the character of relationship to everyday life.

One point must be made at the outset; the reader must not be misled by the features which Israel's religion had in common with that of her neighbours to the point of failing to take account of the equally real differences. This is especially true in the matter of the personality of God. It is true that the gods of all ancient peoples are personal; generally they are "super-people" who share with men the whole spectrum of feeling and action, of virtue and vice, and who are worshipped only because, as a result of their super-human powers they are able to decide the issues of human life. It would be easy, for that reason, to assume that Israel's faith in a personal God represents, like their belief in a three-storey universe, simply a part of the world-view of the ancient near-east, with no particular significance for our study.

Two considerations would seem to suggest that this is too simple a view of the matter. The first is the significance with which Israel invests personality. The words ascribed to God in the creation story, "Let us make ~~man~~ in our own image"

(Gen. 1:27) confer upon man a status far higher than was given him, for example, in the mythological world-view of the Babylonians. That this high view of man's destiny is relevant to an estimate of the biblical view of the personality of God is apparent from the contrast between the personalities of the gods involved in two creation stories, Genesis 1:1 - 2:4 and the Babylonian myth Enuma Elish¹. In the latter, man turns out to be the menial slave of the hero-god Marduk, created out of the blood of the slain god Kingu, eking out a precarious existence in a gash made by Marduk in the corpse of Tiamat, goddess of watery chaos, under constant threat of annihilation. Accordingly, the gods of the story are pictured as fickle and lawless beings, concerned for nobody but themselves, who have to be worshipped for their power but could neither now nor then command the least moral respect. Such was the Babylonian view of the personalities in whose hands lay the issues of human existence. Contrast with this the God who made man in his own image, entrusting him with the decisions affecting his destiny: this God is 'wholly other' not only in power but also in dignity and moral stature. Throughout the bible we find the view that the nature of God's personality is such that in a real sense he deserved to be God.

¹ see Pritchard, J.B. (ed.): Ancient Near Eastern Texts (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1955, 2nd ed.) pp.60-72.

The second consideration which should deter us from identifying Israel's faith too easily with that of her neighbours is the fact that the gods of Babylon, like the gods of most primitive peoples, are very clearly personifications of natural forces; men invest with personality and with great powers those natural forces on which they see their lives as dependent or of which they are afraid. Tiamat, the goddess of watery chaos has already been mentioned; she vividly personified the threatening floods of the Tigris and Euphrates. Marduk was the successor by conquest to the storm-god En-lil and became, because of the natural association of rain with fertility, the god of the harvest who was worshipped in the baal-cults of Syria. Of the God of Israel, however, this is not true; he is not the personification of anything as far as we can see. As will appear later on, he is known as the god "who brings about what he brings about", that is to say, he is the lord of everything. Only Israel's God could be said both to have unleashed the waters of chaos and then, in his restoration of order, pledged himself never to destroy man's existence again.¹ The bible is the attempt of a people to see every situation as brought about by God, the personality behind their whole existence, whose nature it

¹The Story of the Flood. Israel's version (Gen. 6-8) is in great contrast to the Sumerian myth of the Deluge; see Ancient Near Eastern Texts, pp. 42-44.

was their desire to relate as it ~~was~~ revealed to them in the events of their life.

The difficulties inherent in the undertaking the recital of a relationship with a God who was not simply a name for the wind or the water are apparent enough. To expect God to reveal himself in events is to commit oneself to a God of dynamic, changing personality¹, as Israel discovered and accepted when, in the light of her fluctuating experience of the passage of near eastern history, she supplemented and rewrote the recital of her faith.²

Jahweh as Emperor

The biblical portrayal of kingship in Israel is, to say the least, ambiguous. The First Book of Samuel recounts the heroic acts which made David worthy to be Israel's king, anointed by Samuel, the Lord's representative (I Sam. 16), and the Second Book of Kings tells how King Hezekiah, who reigned in Jerusalem at the time of the seige and capture of Samaria by the Assyrians, "did what was right in the eyes of Jahweh, according to all that David his father had done. ... He trusted in Jahweh the God of Israel." (II Kings 18:3) His contempor-

¹To speak of God as "changing" is strange to our ears, because of our Greek heritage: in the neo-Platonic terms of the early Christian centuries, God had to be a part of the unchanging, transcendent world. As we shall see, this was not at all the way in which Israel spoke of God's "otherness".

²A theme dealt with in detail by Wright (op. cit.) and also Guthrie, H.H., Jr.: God and History in the Old Testament (New York, Seabury, 1960)

ary, Hoshea king of Israel, on the other hand, was a more typical king: he "did what was evil in the sight of Jahweh" (II Kings 17:2), which, the writers seem to imply, could have been foreseen had Israel paid attention to Samuel's warning to them when they first asked him to give them a king at the time of the Philistine crisis. (I Samuel 8: 18)

The literary criticism of the Old Testament has found the roots of this ambiguity in ~~the~~ original documents out of which the Pentateuch was composed as we now have it; the two earliest such documents, "J" and "E",¹ sharply divergent views of the monarchy, and this divergence has been traced in different "sources" throughout the "primary history", that is all the books from Genesis to II Kings, excluding Ruth.² The "J" document, containing largely southern traditions, regards the Davidic monarchy as of divine origin, lays considerable stress on God's dealings with the patriarchs, the precursors of the later Davidic kings, and by beginning the saga with God's creation of man³ emphasizes God's commitment to mankind rather

¹For "Jahwist" and "Elohism" respectively: the basis of these designations is explained in the following section.

²see Von Rad, G.: Genesis; a Commentary, pp. 13-42 (Philadelphia, Westminster, 1961)

³That the "J" Creation Story (Gen. 2:4^b foll.) is a polemic against the Enuma Elish is clear from the fact that the first sentence of each is identical in construction, while, on the issue of man's importance they contradict each other entirely.

than his particular relationship with the Israelite people. The "E" document, on the other hand, regards monarchy as alien to Israel's tradition as a tribal confederacy established by Jahweh's covenant with Moses at Horeb.¹ This document contains no creation story, only the sketchiest account of the prehistory of Israel in the patriarchal period, and an overwhelming emphasis on the covenant narrative as the basis of God's exclusive relationship with his people.

The origin of this tension lies in the ideological basis of the pre-Davidic tribal confederacy. Recent archaeological research on the remains of the Hittite civilization, and on the remains of Palestinian urban life prior to 1000 B.C. has led to the conclusion that the people of the Old Testament had their origin in the habiru or "outsiders" who rebelled against their aristocratic Canaanite masters, and thus found it possible to join themselves, politically and ideologically, with a people who believed itself to have been released through the miraculous aid of their God from a state of slavery under the Egyptian Pharaohs.² Thus Israel had always in its corporate memory the most negative attitude to every aspect of aristocratic and monarchical government, even though this attitude presented serious difficulties for political organisation,

¹A large part of the law contained in Exodus and Deuteronomy originates in Israel's desire to identify itself over against her Canaanite neighbours.

²This thesis is expounded by Mendenhall, G.E., "The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine" in Biblical Archaeologist (Sept. 1962) pp. 67-87

especially when they were under pressure from outside attack.

In the period of the Judges, it was possible to have the unifying force of a king without the trappings of an established monarchy which were so objectionable to Israel, by ascribing the office of king to God himself. Thus, Gideon is able to say, when he is offered the office of king, "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; Jahweh will rule over you." (Judges 8:23) Likewise, it is made very clear when the elders of the people ask Samuel to give them a king that, quite apart from the hardships which will result from the institution of monarchy as they knew it under the Canaanites, the issue is ultimately one of loyalty to God which excludes the possibility of appointing a human king; God says to Samuel that in asking for a king "they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them." (I Samuel 8:7)

Even more important, however, than these explicit references is the implication of the way in which Israel first came to describe its relationship to Jahweh. The traditional description of the Sinai/Horeb covenant as "The Ten Commandments" obscures the unity of the covenant form, as it has been discovered elsewhere, as in the treaties made by Hittite emperors¹

¹see Mendenhall, G.E.: "Law and Covenant in Israel and in the Ancient Near East" in Biblical Archaeologist (1954) pp. 26-46, 49-76, for this and what follows. The form has been discovered in other ancient near-eastern treaties: see Baltzer, Klaus; Das Bundesformular (Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, Neukirchen, 1960)

with their subject peoples. That this form was used by Israel is in itself a strong indication that Jahweh was understood primarily as emperor during the period of the Judges. Thus the preamble to the Ten Commandments, "I am Jahweh your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exod. 20:2), like the preambles to Hittite suzerainty treaties, giving the name of the emperor and the exploits which made him emperor, has to be seen as closely united with, and ultimately the basis of, the stipulations which follow:

On the one hand, the explanation of the basis of the stipulations is closely tied to the narrative introduction; for the deeds described there are indeed the basis for the setting out of the treaty relationship. On the other hand, the explanation of the basis of the treaty expresses the intention of the stipulations which follow it. The stipulations are the proper consequences of the treaty relationship: if the partner is loyal, he will abide by the particular undertakings.¹

Thus the commandments, corresponding as they do with the stipulations in political treaties, arise out of a relationship created by facts described in the narrative form which precedes them: they define the conditions under which the goodwill of their emperor Jahweh can continue to be expected.

¹Baltzer, Klaus; op. cit. p. 22 (my trans.) The treaty structure comprises generally: 1) Preamble (the emperor's name and ancestry), 2) Narrative, 3) Basis of Treaty, 4) Stipulations, 5) Calling gods to witness, 6) Blessings and Curses consequent upon breaking or keeping the treaty, 7) Provision for publicizing the treaty, see ibid. p.20. For this form as it appears in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy, see ibid. pp. 29-47.

It is to this apprehension of God as, in some sense, emperor that we have to look for the cause of the tension which arose when, in the normal course of political development expedited, in this case, by the crisis of Philistine expansion around 1000 B.C., a strong central government under a monarch became desirable. The "J" document represents the attempt of those who welcomed this change to describe it as the proper development of Israel's life. It was against this that not only the "E" document, but also the books of the Kings, and prophets such as Elijah and Hosea reacted; they represent the resentment against the Davidic monarchy felt, particularly in the north, by those who had "no inheritance in the sons of Jesse."¹

This was no mere political issue. Israel's pre-monarchical political structure was deeply interwoven, so those represented by "E" believed, with her perception of the person of Jahweh as sole emperor in Israel; to them, the introduction of monarchy could only seem like a return to the slavery they had known, whether literally or mythologically, under Pharaoh. Since their liberation from that slavery was the core of their religious faith, those who wished to justify the Davidic monarchy had to provide not merely political justification but also theological reassurance. It was incumbent upon them to

¹I Kings 12:16. The battle-cry of the revolt which split the nation in two, when Jeroboam led those from the north to break with Rehoboam, successor to Solomon, is a good example of the close relationship between political and theological issues.

show that Saul and David, the temple and city of Jerusalem, represented not a return to the Canaanite civilization which they had been bidden, on pain of death, to destroy¹ but the will of the same God whom previously they had understood as sole sovereign. Soon the tide of political history was borne a new apprehension of the person of Jahweh in Israel.

Jahweh Who Brings to Pass

The designations "Jahwist" and "Elohists", after which the "J" and "E" documents are called, have been given to the two traditions about which we have spoken, as they manifest themselves in the Pentateuch, because of the different names which they use for God prior to the disclosure of the divine name to Moses.² The northern, anti-monarchical "E" document uses the name "Elohim", generally translated simply God, thereby connecting God's disclosure of himself as Jahweh with the covenant figure, Moses. The "J" document on the other hand uses the name "Jahweh" from the beginning; his creation story starts, "In the day that Jahweh God made the heavens and the earth ..." (Gen. 2:4^b)

¹see Exod. 34:11-16, the ban or holy war commandment. In a holy war, the victorious Israel was required to destroy every trace of the vanquished civilization.

²Exodus 3:13-15. The name Jahweh, translated in the Revised Standard Version, "I AM" is probably originally a causative verb, signifying "I BRING TO PASS".

The use of the divine name before the covenant era by the Jahwist, and the failure of the Elohist, in reaction, to do the same, are strong evidence that it was the contention of the former that Jahweh's claim did not rest on his exclusive covenant with the tribal confederacy but rather on his commitment to mankind as a whole, a commitment symbolized by his making of the first man as the first member of creation¹ and his dealings with the patriarchs. Specifically, the entry into the promised land is no longer the result of God's covenant with his people, but, on the contrary, of a unilateral and unconditional promise on God's part made to Abraham:

Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan. ... Jahweh said to Abraham ... "Lift up your eyes, and look from this place where you are, northward, and southward, and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see I will give to you and to your descendants for ever. I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your descendants also can be counted. Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you." (Genesis 12:12, 14-17)

It is not simply that the Jahwist has given a new emphasis, speaking more of the patriarchs and less of the covenant. The very motif of covenant is given new significance, not only by the unilateral Abrahamic covenant, but also by

¹ Contrast in this regard the Jahwist's creation story with the later one from the priestly tradition (Genesis 2:4^b foll. and 1:1-2:4^a respectively)

The Jealous God

It was not merely that a nation in the kind of ideological tension we have just described could not survive intact. It was also that neither element in that tension contained all there was to be said about Jahweh's relationship with his people. On the surface, the revolt of the ten northern tribes under Jeroboam (I Kings 12) is merely the revolt of the Elohist tradition in reaction against the Jahwistic synthesis of covenant and monarchy; but on examination, it contained something more, something which was to mark the history of the divided kingdom right up to its end in 587. It was the beginning of what later became the burden of the prophets, that Jahweh could not be imprisoned within any covenant, with Moses or with David, and that he could not be relied on to be the God who brought about always what they had been led to expect.¹

Jeroboam's revolt solved nothing. A king was as politically necessary in Israel as he had been in the united kingdom, and so the tension remained. The bible has little to tell us of what must presumably have been the fairly success-

¹Jeroboam's revolt is in fulfilment of the prophecy of Ahijah, and results, according to the writer of Kings, from the faithlessness of the king. God's former kindness is no guarantee against the consequences of that: indeed it may exacerbate his anger: "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." (Amos 3:2)

ful reigns of some of the kings of Israel,¹ and is content to present them as the source of all evil, against whom, from the time of the division of the Davidic kingdom to the fall of Samaria in 722, from Elijah to Hosea, there arise a constant succession of prophets to declare to the kings their evil, and the impending judgment of God.

Yet their message is more basic than this. It concerns ultimately the understanding of Jahweh in Israel, and that which the prophets of the northern kingdom are most concerned to relate is the theme of Jahweh's jealous anger. Israel's cardinal sin during this period is that of idolatry, the worship of the gods of the surrounding culture, the very culture which to some extent David had baptized into the service of Jahweh and against which Jeroboam had led his revolt. Thus we read frequently of the kings of Israel as "walking in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat"² and this refers to Jeroboam's building of two golden calves at Dan and Bethel so as to discourage his subjects from returning to Jerusalem for worship,³ and throughout Jahweh's reaction is portrayed simply as jealousy - "Thou shalt have none other gods but me."

This theme is made explicit more and more as the sin becomes more and more explicit. Ahab's ultimate unfaithfulness

¹"Behold they are contained in the books of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel." See I Kings 14:19, et passim.

²see I Kings 16:26 et passim.

³I Kings 12:25 foll.

to Jahweh in marrying a Sidonian princess and introducing the worship of Baal (I Kings 16:31) amounts to putting political power before loyalty to Jahweh, and that is what provokes the confrontation between the prophets of Baal and Elijah, the prophet of Jahweh, on Mount Carmel. The theme of Elijah's message is clear: "How long will you go limping between two opinions? If Jahweh is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." (I Kings 18:21) A choice has to be made, for there is no loyalty to Jahweh that is not exclusive loyalty. It is in the context of Jahweh's jealousy that the slaughter of the prophets of Baal following Jahweh's proof of his sovereignty has to be understood.

It was left to Hosea, however, to develop the theme of Jahweh's jealousy to the point where it could yield fruit in Israel's later self-understanding. It is often said that Hosea is the prophet who proclaims the divine love (usually in contrast to someone like Amos who is said to speak only of judgment). But this is much too simple. The motif of love in Hosea, it turns out, serves only to intensify the terror of the judgment which is about to come upon Israel: Jahweh's jealous anger appears with a quite new pathos:

When Israel was a child I loved him, and out of
Egypt I called my son. The more I called them,
the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing
to the Baals and burning incense to idols. (Hosea 11:1-2)

Jahweh loves Israel not only as a child but also as a bride,

but the son has forsaken his father and the bride has played the harlot.¹ The intimacy of the relationship makes his anger the more intense. In the allegorical naming of Hosea's children, and particularly in the naming of the last two, the judgment is complete. The second is named Lo-Ruhammah, meaning "No more pity is found" (Hos. 1:6), but the implication of this broken intimacy is spelled out undeniably when God tells Hosea how to name the third child: "Call his name Lo-Ammi [Not-my-people], for you are not my people and I am Lo-ehjah [Not--Jahweh²] to you." (Hos. 1:9) In the negation of the divine name the God who, Israel hoped, would "bring to pass" their expectations becomes "I-do-not-bring-to-pass" and the depth of the estrangement is all too clear. There is no hope, it seems, in Jahweh; let it not be said that God cannot change his mind.

God's Steadfast Love

There does not exist today any organized group of Marcionites,³ and yet the view that the Old Testament portrays a God of

¹The motif appears throughout chapters 1 to 3.

²This passage, like L-ruhammah, is very hard to translate, because of the double meaning of the words. I have referred to Ackroyd, P.B.: "Hosea" in Peake's Bible Commentary, revised edn., ed. Black, Matthew (London, Nelson, 1962) p.605.

³Marcion, died ca. 160, known chiefly through his opponents, led a sect devoted to the Lucan Gospel's God of Love, whom Marcion believed to have overcome the "demiurge", or creator-god, whom he thought to have been portrayed in the Old Testament. (See Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, p.854)

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inexorable justice, by contrast with the New Testament God of pure love, is remarkably persistent among Christian people. We shall have occasion later on to correct this balance as far as the New Testament is concerned, but enough has been said to show that love had become part of the personality of God several centuries before Christ. By the time of the destruction of the kingdom of Israel in 722, the foundation had already been laid for an understanding of Jahweh's relationship with his people which later on would give rise to that overarching hope which is integral to the faith as we have received it. That foundation was Jahweh's enduring devotion to his covenant.

More than any other meaning, the Hebrew word hesed, which the Revised Standard Version generally translates "steadfast love", connotes the quality of endurance. In the context of the covenant between Jahweh and his people, it is clear that the reference is to an unshakeable loyalty; this loyalty, it is true, is part of the demand which is laid on Israel as the recipient of that covenant, but it is that because of the loyalty which Jahweh himself has shown towards them.. Samaria was destroyed, and a mere twenty years later the southern kingdom of Judah was ravaged by an Assyrian invasion. But the fact that Jerusalem was spared "like a flagstaff on top of a mountain" (Isaiah 30:17) is the occasion for the expression in Isaiah and Micah of a hope for God's people such as Amos and Hosea could not bring themselves to see. It is a hope, however,

which does not reside in any relaxation of Jahweh's earlier demands but rather in the conviction that God would not give up the enterprise on which he had staked so much. This conviction grew out of a history which had come to include not only judgment and doom but also merciful restoration.

I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob, I will gather the remnant of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture, a noisy multitude of men. ... Their king will pass on before them, Jahweh at their head.

(Micah 2:12, 13)

The merciful restoration is located in Jerusalem and the royal house, and neither Isaiah nor Micah¹ could conceive of it in any other way. For a time, in the power vacuum created by the decline of Assyria, little happened to disturb the confidence of the southern kingdom. Indeed, under Josiah (reigned 640-609) not only was the territory around Jerusalem, lost at the turn of the seventh century, regained but there was during the last twelve years of his reign an attempt at the reform and centralization of the cult. For our purpose, however, the important feature to notice is

¹This needs some qualification in the case of Micah. Although the fashion of regarding as inauthentic any oracle expressing hope has passed, it is clear that much of the material in chs. 4-7 did not come from the prophet himself. However N. K. Gottwald expresses the view that the Zion-centredness of these later, added, oracles is to be explained by the emphasis on Jerusalem by the prophet himself (Micah 1:2, 12; 3:9-12) See Gottwald, N.K.: A Light to the Nations* (New York, Harper & Bros., 1959) and All the Kingdoms of the Earth (Harper & Row, 1964) pp.208-212. (*pp.305-308.)

that this time of relative prosperity restored an understanding of Jahweh far more reminiscent of that which prevailed under the Davidic monarchy: the book of Deuteronomy, which seems to have been the basis of the reform,¹ is in the familiar form of the suzerainty treaty² and the understanding of Jahweh's hesed which it offers is of a favour which can be guaranteed provided that the laws are kept.³

This theology of reform did not last long. After the death of Josiah at Megiddo and the rise of Babylonian power under Nebuchadnezzar, it became clear that the Deuteronomic reforms had been predicated on an excessive optimism. The writer of Kings, commenting after the fall of Jerusalem (587) can find no place for Jahweh's steadfast love:

Still Jahweh did not turn from the fierceness of his great wrath by which his anger was kindled against Judah. ... And Jahweh said, "I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city which I have chosen, Jerusalem ..." (II Kings 23:26-27)

Fortunately, however, there were those to whom, when the crisis came, it was given to see through the darkness.

¹The reform is described in II Kings 22-23. See also de Vaux, Roland: Ancient Israel; Its Life and Institutions (London, Darton Longman and Todd, 1961) pp. 336-339.

²See above, p.17 note 1, p. 18 note 1.

³For this view, see especially Deut. 30:15-20.

Out of Jahweh's former mercies, there comes to Jeremiah the faith that Jahweh's enduring patience could not possibly have been annulled, despite the impending doom of the Holy Nation. It is not only Jeremiah who speaks in anguished tones, protesting before Jahweh at the terrible message he has to declare; Jahweh too in Jeremiah is presented in the profoundest anguish, desperately asking Jeremiah to search the streets of Jerusalem for the one righteous man who would be sufficient to merit Jahweh's forgiveness for the whole nation. (Jer. 5:1)¹ As the immensity of God's anger dawns on the prophet, so also Jahweh's record as the one who has shown hesed to his people remains. The result of this tension is an understanding of Jahweh not only as anguished but also as the source of hope for the future: "'But even in those days,' says Jahweh, 'I will not make a full end of you.'" (Jer. 4:9)

The Wise Creator

Concern with the workings of nature had been a prominent feature of the religion of Israel's contemporaries from

¹The division between the prophet's personal anguish and that of Jahweh is never entirely clear. Despite the claim of both Bright, John: "Jeremiah" (Anchor Bible, vol. 21*, Garden City, Doubleday, 1966) and Paterson, John: "Jeremiah" (Peake's Bible Commentary) p. 543, it seems hard to distinguish 4:19-21 as words of Jahweh and call the surrounding words Jeremiah's. Theirs is a shared anguish. (*p.34)

the beginning; their religion served to explain by means of nature myths and to control by sympathetic magic the powerful elemental forces of nature, which they personified as deities. To them, the meaning of human life, dominated as it was by the forces of a world beyond man's control, had to be described in terms of transactions in the mythological realm of the gods. Israel's concern, on the contrary, was with the meaning of human life and human action; they resisted every attempt to introduce nature cults into their religion, be they cults of Aaron's golden calf or the worship of Baal, and spoke of a God who in his power over all events and all forces was not the personification of any of them.

Nonetheless, the end of Israel's existence as a nation aroused a new concern to explain the wider context, the realm of nature, in which human events occurred. To some extent, this process had begun as soon as, under the monarchy, the formerly nomadic tribes acquired a more settled existence, but it was not until the exile that the kind of creation narrative we now have at the beginning of Genesis, one which takes account of something more than the origin of man, achieved official acceptance. At the same time, this new concern could not eradicate Israel's distinctive evaluation of human destiny, for it remains man who is both the crown of creation and its master, by divine command. (Gen. 1:26-31)

An understanding of God as Creator clearly comes out of a tradition that is far more self-conscious and reflective. Now, in post-exilic Judaism, far more is made of the art of living out one's life in accordance with the dictates of the Creator-God. This highly practical art is known as "wisdom". Out of the common tradition of the ancient near east, joined with Israel's distinctive insight, there emerge such books as Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus.

The God of these books is the Creator-God and so also the source of wisdom. Wisdom herself is described in a highly personal way, but the point of concern for us is rather the manner in which Judaism sought to preserve its relationship with God at a time when it had no historical identity with which he could be said to relate. The code of priestly laws, hitherto simply the way in which historic Israel had expressed in cultic form its faith in a God who was active in its corporate life, was now interpreted in the light of wisdom theology as the way in which the individual had to exist if he wished to remain in harmony with the world. "The fear of Jahweh is the beginning of wisdom." (Job 28:28)

It is no surprise to find that such a theology, far removed as it was from the tradition of the common people and with so complicated a religious system as the source of meaning in life, brought into being not a people which believed itself to be related to a personal God, but rather

a leisured theocracy who alone had the time to study and obey the torah of God. Such men had good reason to thank God "that they are not as other men are" as the Pharisee in the parable, we may suppose quite typically and quite sincerely, did (Luke 18:9-14). For the "other men" there was no hope. This hopelessly exclusive understanding of God's relationship to mankind arises out of the agony of a people that had lost its historic destiny, to whose current situation its former understanding of Jahweh had nothing to contribute. This agony is classically expressed in the book of Job: when Job cries out against his unjust fate, he receives from his friends only the outworn answers of the Deuteronomic age, and to know those answers were false it was necessary only to look around at the successors of Josiah, a religious sect struggling to maintain its existence under successive periods of foreign domination. When in the story God answers it is not with hope of explanation, but only with the affirmation of his total otherness, his absolute power and wisdom which it is not given to mere men to understand. "Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty?" (Job 40:1)

False hopes there certainly were. The brief revival under the Maccabees was one, and the literature of apocalyptic, Daniel and Enoch among others, was another. Both were dependent on a view of God as an almighty tyrant who would

would not wait too long before putting the record straight once and for all. The Jahweh of apocalyptic is no covenant partner, or even a covenant king, but rather a cosmic dictator who would finally sweep all the Jews' enemies away. We know what happened to that hope: in contrast to it, and yet largely because of its expression in the zealot movements, there has been no temple in Jerusalem for nineteen centuries. Yet it was necessary that false hopes should be exhausted before men could receive the true one, in the fulness of time.

The New Deal

We have seen thus far how the events of history shaped Israel's understanding of God. It was not that they had to forget what they had previously learnt of him, but rather that new hopes were added and old ones disappointed: God was personal, and persons do act with a certain constancy which enables us to recognize them, but that constancy is not the constancy of a natural law.

With the New Testament, however, there is a difference. In effect there was no new historical situation requiring a new understanding of God. Jesus came, in a sense, when things were more or less as they had been, with minor variations for four centuries. However that situation had produced, as I have said, some unsuccessful attempts to speak

about God and his purpose, and Jesus did fulfil some of the messianic expectations contained in those attempts.¹ His teaching combined much of the wisdom of the contemporary rabbis with the urgent proclamation that the hour of apocalyptic fulfilment was at hand. Had there not been that continuity with what had preceded him, it is doubtful whether Jesus' followers could have claimed that he was "both the fullest revelation of the character of God and his purpose, and the culmination of that purpose."²

Yet their witness also testifies to that which was utterly new. Not only was he able to tie together both in his teaching and in the acting out of his ministry the theme of apocalyptic fulfilment, and therefore of Jahweh's kingship, with the theme of hope through suffering as it had been given to Second Isaiah to discern it after the exile; far more important, he was able to reveal in a unique way Jahweh's true purpose in history, which was not the restoration to power and independence of an exclusive, covenanted group, but rather the justification of mankind "while we were yet sinners" (Romans 5:8). This is the true end of Jahweh's steadfast love. The New Covenant is a stumbling block to the

¹For a detailed account of the apocalyptic hope of Jesus' contemporaries, and their expectation of a Messiah, and his relation to both, see Mowinckel, S.: He That Cometh (tr. Anderson, New York, Abingdon Press, 1954) pp. 280-450.

²Guthrie, H.H. Jr.: op. cit. pp. 150-151.

Jews precisely because it is a covenant made with the ungodly, sealed in the suffering of one who identified fully with them, and not with the pious elite who thought it enough that they were the seed of Abraham and kept the law.

This aspect of Jesus' claim is spelled out very clearly in Paul's letters to the Romans and to the Galatians.¹ These letters are fundamentally about the nature, that is to say the character, of God and of his righteousness (δικαιοσύνη). That righteousness does not consist in siding with his chosen people or abiding by his torah; it is rather a relationship towards mankind which has to be seen as concern for the outcast. Such is the character of God according to the New Testament: that character implies the harshest of judgments upon the "hypocrites", who in their misunderstanding of the divine purpose trust in some outward sign of salvation:² it also implies salvation for all who can join with the outcast in accepting that character and that purpose with faith and embrace a relationship with him.

¹The view expressed by Dr. Ernst Kaesemann in a lecture delivered at the Harvard Divinity School on March 21st 1966, under the title: Justification and Salvation History in the Epistle to the Romans. Kaesemann points out that neither the theme of the centrality of faith nor the theme of the Jews' place in salvation history can be considered key topics of that epistle: both subserve the main topic, which is God's purpose in the justification of the ungodly.

²Stendahl, K.: The Gospel of Matthew (lectures given at Harvard Divinity School, spring 1966) suggests that the word "hypocrite" refers to the synagogue Jews who are making this mistake. The word, therefore, has nothing to do with modern notions of insincerity.

Communication and Relationship

Failure to understand the character of God is the cardinal error of those who disobey him, throughout the biblical literature. That is true for a reason. What makes it inexcusable to act on a wrong understanding of the nature of God is the fact, which the biblical writers never questioned, that God communicated his purpose throughout Israel's history not only through the events themselves but also through appointed spokesmen. "Surely Jahweh does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7) We have so far traced, albeit very briefly, the Heilsgeschichte, the course of saving events, out of which came ever new, and yet always connected, insight into the character of God. But what saves the bible from being a mere chronicle of events is that these events are considered as disclosures of God, either in themselves or else because these events were predicted or explained by men to whom God chose to reveal himself.¹ The following remarks are intended

¹"... if it [Heilsgeschichte] is to remain history and not become simply the specifically Israelite type of religious idea, its historicity must be worked out along the lines of Lichtungsgeschichte [enlightenment-history]. That is, Heilsgeschichte is to be approached initially as the linguistic expression evoked by a given subject matter; the God who acts." - Robinson, James M. "Basic Shifts in German Theology" (Interpretation, January 1962, pp. 76-97) p.93. In this article, Robinson suggests a working out of the idea of salvation history in terms of the history of the growth of understanding. The category of Lichtungsgeschichte was applied

how the motif of personal communication with God developed during the course of Israel's history.

In the days before the birth of Samuel, we are told, "the word of Jahweh was rare ...; there was no frequent vision." (I Samuel 3:1) This is a way of saying all was quiet, and nothing significant was occurring; it is not merely saying there was a lack of religious experience, but that events were indecisive and life appeared to have no particular direction. For the Hebrews, then, the word of God was no mere voice; it carries authority, and is therefore active; it shakes mountains and puts enemies to rout.

But if the distinction between God's activity and his communication with his people is therefore a blurred one, so also is the distinction between the way in which he acts in human affairs and the way in which he acts in nature. In ~~both~~ cases it is by his word. Thus he does not, in the creation story make the light, or anything else in the world: he simply simply commands and it is so. (Gen. 1:3, 6, 7, 9, etc.)

[from p. 38] by Heidegger to the history of Western thought, but clearly is applicable to the kind of study we have been making.

Out of a completely different philosophical tradition, that of the British empiricists, the similar concept of "disclosure" is being used to furnish a basis for the whole body of religious language; see Ramsey, I.T.: op. cit., and in Christian Discourse; Some Logical Explorations (London, Oxford University Press, 1965).

The biblical material is treated from the perspective of revelation in Robinson, H.W.: Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1946)

The tradition of revelation by the word of God seems to belong most closely with the premonarchical and anti-monarchical traditions. For the building of the temple and the embracing of cultural idioms more like those of Israel's near-eastern neighbours led to the use of a new means of describing the divine communication. Instead of being informed by a visitation of the word of Jahweh, the prophets, like Isaiah, who come from Jerusalem are allowed in visions to be seated in the council of the gods, of which Jahweh is conceived as the chief, and hear the decisions which will decide the issues of human history. "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw Jahweh sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." (Isaiah 6:1) Ezekiel too stands in this tradition. His visionary prophecy has no place for the word of God, except as a mere semantic form.

If the monarchy produced a new description of divine communication to accompany its new theology as expressed by the Jahwist,¹ we shall not be surprised to find that talk of the word of God and of presence in the council of the gods too gives way to a new idiom appropriate to the wisdom theology of the post-exilic age. God's communication is now more

¹It is perhaps necessary to say again what was said briefly in the Introduction (see p. 4), namely that words like 'theology' or 'idea' of God are part of our intellectual framework and therefore cannot be avoided. They must not, however be thought of as belonging to the time of the bible.

indirect; it is the imparting of "wisdom" to enable a man to live. Nonetheless, those who spoke of wisdom still understood themselves to be in communication with the same God who had revealed himself by his word and by vision: they could look back from the changed situation of later Judaism and find their roots in such words as Solomon's prayer:

Now, O Jahweh God, thou hast made thy servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people whom thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be counted for multitude. Give thy servant therefore an understanding heart to govern thy people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to govern thy great people ? (I Kings 3:7-9)

In the New Testament, however, the divine self-disclosure is not by word, or by vision, or by wisdom primarily, but literally "in the flesh". So indeed it had to be if the New Covenant of which we have already spoken was to have any meaning. The hearing of the word of God, participation in the council of the gods and the correct interpretation of torah were given only to the few who were chosen: if salvation history was to be located now with those who were outside the ranks of the chosen, the revelation could not take the form of any of these exclusive means; it had to be by a man who would be rejected by the exclusive group, who would eat and drink with publicans and sinners, who would claim he had come "not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17),

who could be said to thank his father "that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will." (Luke 10:21).

So, though the means changed as theology changed, the claim is always made that God is revealing himself through the events and making their significance clear.¹ Out of that communication, there emerged a relationship between men and God, which also is articulated in a manner appropriate to the existing situation. From God's side, when men are desperately pining in their Babylonian exile, there comes the hope proclaimed by Second Isaiah (Isaiah 40-55); when they are forsaking him, there come words of contention and rebuke;² from man's side come the agonizing doubts of Job or the triumphant faith of the Song of Deborah (Judges 5). When God is seen as emperor, man sees his proper response as obedience; as he is known also as the one who brings about the saving events of Israel's history, thankfulness becomes man's primary response; to the Creator God, man responds

¹Consider Ezekiel's affirmation, no less than 54 times, of the basis of Jahweh's acts "that they may know that I am Jahweh". See Barr, James: "Revelation through History in the Old Testament and in Modern Theology" (Interpretation, April, 1963, pp. 193-205) for the importance of divine communication.

²For an example of the particular form of contention known as the ribh or covenant controversy, see Micah 6:1-8. This form is discussed in Huffmon, H.B.: "The Covenant Lawsuit in the Prophets" (Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXVIII, 1959, pp. 285-295).

in the bible with a sense of awe and mystery, and the majestic praise which we find in the psalms.¹ To the God of the wisdom tradition, the response is practical in the sense that men direct their efforts just at the fulfilment of those obligations which belong to those who wish to live successfully and significantly in the world.

To the God whom Jesus called "Father", two responses are possible: the "godly" can only reject what is occurring as an intolerable threat to the whole meaning of their lives: to them, the Jesus who always refused to become another zealot or another rabbi had to be destroyed as a blasphemer, the destroyer of the expansive hopes and elaborate system where, as they believed, lay their only chance of communion with God. The "ungodly" on the other hand, the publicans and sinners, can accept Jesus in the only way possible, as a gift. Despite their reluctance to bear the consequences of that acceptance, those whom the religious of the day had cast out had a need which enabled them to accept him on something approaching God's terms. After all, the priests could not offer them access to the loving-kindness of God on any terms, for ~~they~~ they did not believe the son of man had power on earth to forgive. Only the needy found Jesus good news.

¹See Guthrie, H.H., Jr.: Israel's Sacred Songs; a Study of Dominant Themes (New York, Seabury Press, 1966) pp.59-117. This book shows the psalms presenting, for cultic purposes, most of the descriptions of and responses to God outlined in this chapter.

The Issue

The bible is the chronicle of a relationship. What distinguishes it from a metaphysical treatise about the Supreme Being is the conviction, always present, that the God whom the biblical writers were proclaiming was a God with whom they were having dealings, and whom they had come to know through those dealings. Thus what the bible says about God is, without exception, experiential. This, at any rate, is the conviction of the writers themselves.

Those, on the one hand, who would like to say that the bible's use of personal categories in speaking of God is a phenomenon resulting simply from the cultural environment out of which the bible came should bear two things in mind. If we wish to "demythologize" the personal categories, our first task is to find out what in the Hebrew consciousness the personal God represents. In the case of Marduk or Tiamat it is not hard to see what forces are being personified; in the case of Jahweh of Israel, however, this is extremely hard. It should be clear by now that the Israelites' motive in proclaiming Jahweh was not at all to control or explain a force in nature which they could not master by themselves, but, on the contrary, to affirm a historical destiny which was most emphatically theirs to bring to fruition.

Secondly, it is important to have the anthropomorphisms of the bible, so often mentioned in this connection, in a

proper perspective. When God is said, in the Eden story, to be seen "walking in the garden in the cool of the evening" (Genesis 3:8), it is pointless to raise the question whether this was intended by the writer to be "taken literally". For a people endeavouring to relate the meaning of their existence as a people and of the events of natural events of life, over against a surrounding culture which regarded man's life at best as a precarious reflection of decisions taken in a supernatural realm, the issue of being "taken literally" was the last one that would arise. Seeing the message of the Eden story as an affirmation about Israel's life as a people, we shall realize that the last thing the Eden story wishes to present is an account of the afternoon recreational habits of a supernatural being.

On the other hand, those who would like to regard the bible message as true for all time, and who, therefore, would like to speak of a personal God in just the same terms as the biblical writers do without any reference to the intellectual history of the last two thousand years, should reflect that to do this is to ascribe to the biblical writers an "idea of God" which is timeless and beyond experience. This, as we have said, is hard for us to avoid because we are accustomed to abstract thought, but we must not make the mistake of forgetting the inevitable anachronism involved here. To regard the message of a personal God as one we must accept without

reference to our own experience is to contradict the very heart of that message, God's affirmation of the human person and his experience, and his activity as the fruits of God's commitment to the world: Jesus said of men that they are known by their fruits, and this is unquestionably true of the way in which Israel claimed to have received the self-disclosure of the living God.

It would not even be true to say, after the manner of modern science, that God was a theory under which the people of Israel consolidated their experience. The side headings of this chapter, "Jahweh as Emperor", "The Jealous God", "God's Steadfast Love" and so forth, are in many cases phrases from the bible itself; but they are not the names of theories. They resemble far more nearly song titles, exclamations from which we cannot make deductions. It cannot be said to follow from the repeated occurrence of "Jahweh said..." that the Hebrews thought God had a voice.

If the personal God of the bible is not a nature myth, a super-man, an idea or a theory, what are we to say? We are left with the undeniable fact that the bible's God is personal, and no clear reason for that.

Let it first be said that to pre-scientific man, the only known constancy is the constancy of personality. The Hebrews shared with their contemporaries the inability explain any regularity, be it the cycle of the seasons or the

inexorable consequences of moral evil, except by saying that it was planned that way; if events were predictable at all, it must be because somebody had arranged them.

To say that, however, is not enough. God's dealings with man in the bible are characterized not only by constancy but also by its opposite. History was not always beneficent; nature could not always be guaranteed. Times change, and a description of reality in terms of constancies (the themes used as headings in this chapter) are always falsified in the course of time, and this in turn brings about a new and changed understanding. On the other hand, changed times do not lead to the view that Israel had made a mistake in its earlier description, but rather that there was an aspect of God's character which they had not fully understood or taken into account. Thus when there is a change, and a new theme is introduced, the old is not thrown aside but preserved together, and if necessary in tension, with the new. For the constancy of a person is not the constancy of a natural law, rigourously consistent and predictable; it is a constancy which permits change and even the mystery of paradox.

This is our problem. If the biblical writers used personality in their talk about God primarily because they were not scientific and had insufficiently understood the regularities of nature and history, then it will be hard for

the twentieth-century man to use the same category, and the personal God will deservedly suffer the same fate, and for the same reason, as the three-storey universe. But if on the other hand there lies behind the biblical narrative an albeit unconscious recognition that the Reality behind the reality of human experience contains not only constancy but inconsistency, so that it cannot properly be described in itself but only as the subject of events; if furthermore that Reality contained an element of enigma, of permanently insoluble mystery, so that it could not so much be explained but addressed; if both the anguished Job and the confident Second Isaiah had some sense that both anguish and faith were responses to the same Reality; if above all Jesus could believe that Reality demanded a loyalty worth crucifixion and his followers could later proclaim that same Reality as not permitting that loyalty to go without vindication; if these things are part of the biblical message, then the issue for us cannot be so easily settled. Whether or not we too can use the categories of personality will depend not only on whether we can identify ourselves with the hopes of the bible but on whether we too discover in personality the same mysterious dialectic of constancy and change. If so, then the personality of God may still be a proclamation for our time.

CHAPTER THREE

TWO MODERN INTERPRETATIONS

"God" is the answer to the question implied in man's finitude; he is the name for that which concerns man ultimately. This does not mean that first there is a being called God and then the demand that man should be ultimately concerned about him. It means that whatever concerns a man ultimately becomes god for him, and, conversely, it means that a man can be concerned ultimately only about that which is god for him. (ST I, p.211)

God is.

(CD II,1 p.257)¹

Nowhere do the consequences of the basic methodological differences between Barth and Tillich appear more clearly than in their discussion of the doctrine of God, and for that reason if for no other their handling of the subject of this thesis is highly instructive. Both writers have sections entitled "The Reality of God" (ST I, pp. 211-288; CD II,1, pp. 257-677), but the appearance which they give is radically different. The opening words of each, quoted above, symbolize their very different approaches. They are both concerned passionately with truth, with what is, and in that sense they are both discussing an ontological

¹Throughout, ST for Tillich, Paul: Systematic Theology (Chicago, University of Chicago Press; Volume I, 1951, Volume II, 1957): CD for Barth, Karl: Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark; Volume I Part 1 (trans. Thomson, G.T.) 1936, Volume II Part 1 (pp. 3-254 trans. Parker, T.H.L., pp. 257-297 trans. Johnston, W.B.) 1957.

question. Nonetheless, for Tillich there is an over-riding phenomenological interest, necessitated by his wish to construct a theological system by the "method of correlation" (ST I, p. 8 et passim), the correlation of the Christian revelation with man's questions; the Systematic Theology has five parts, and each part has two sections, the first of which is in every case phenomenological. To say that Tillich's sole concern is with man's questions would be a caricature, but it is certainly with man's questions that he begins every topic, and man's predicament which governs his total presentation. The absence of a section, for example, devoted specifically to the doctrine of man is accounted for by the obvious importance of the human situation in the whole enterprise.

For Barth, however, the beginning and end of the total dogmatic enterprise is the truth which has been revealed in the Word of God, against which it is the task of the dogmatic theologian to test the Church's proclamation.¹ Thus, regardless of any human questions or concerns, it is a fact, the fact, that "God is." So, as we shall discover in examining their positions concerning the issue of the personality of God, the answer for Barth lies in recourse to the revelation, for Tillich in an examination of the part played by the idea

¹For Barth's view of the dogmatic enterprise, see his "Prolegomena", CD I, 1.

relationship between man and the one God, expressing the need of communion with the object of ultimate concern. "Man cannot be ultimately concerned about something which is less than he is, something impersonal." (ST I, p.223) - a remark we shall do well to remember in evaluating Tillich's total position. Always, though, there is the protest against the reduction of the gods to human stature, against the sub-personalizing of the super-personal gods.

Out of the tension between the ultimate and the concrete, one of three things can happen: the decay of the gods, after the manner of Homer's immortals, to the point where they cease to be the expressions of ultimate concern, which is the victory of the concrete, even when this decay is followed by the creation of a monarchical monotheism: there, the elevation of one of the deities above the rest does, to begin with, express ultimacy, a power transcending that of all the other deities. But they inevitably seek out their revenge as the concrete reasserts itself,¹ particularly since man's hold on the ultimate is always tenuous.

The second possible development avoids this danger: the emergence of a mystical type of monotheism means that all elements of the concrete are swallowed up in ultimacy. Yet

¹The reader will recognize some of the material mentioned in the last chapter as falling within this description: not only Israel's frequent apostasy from Jahweh, but also the nature of Marduk's rise to power over the Babylonian pantheon.

there is a price to be paid for this too. The overwhelming ultimacy of mysticism puts it out of reach for all but a few, and the quest for concreteness invariably reasserts itself.

The third solution, exclusive monotheism, is what is found, according to Tillich, in the flowering of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. There God is ultimate, and yet he is also concrete, Jahweh, who led his people out of Egypt. (ST I p.226) Here Tillich's rebuttal of subjectivism is given substance in the principle of justice as it is established in the Ten Commandments. They in themselves would not establish the universality of Jahweh, because on their own they are simply the expression by one people of its ultimate concern. It is later on, as we saw in the last chapter, that this justice is shown to have universal application:

This [universal principle of justice] means that God is independent of his nation and of his own individual nature. If his nation breaks the covenant, he still remains in power. He proves his universality by destroying his nation in the name of principles which are valid for all nations - the principle of justice. (ST I p.227, my underlining)

The word "proves" is not, of course, to be taken in a mathematical sense, but it seems that in using it, Tillich wishes to say that there is a universality beyond my ultimate concern, a universality, something "valid" for all nations, something which ~~breaks~~ the vicious circle which is implicit in the relationship between the holy and man's ultimate concern,

something which, in some sense, ranks with the objective realities of the universe.

The difficulty is to determine in what sense. In the face of his warning to his readers that they are not to suppose that "first there is a being called God and then the demand that man should be ultimately concerned about him", (ST I p.211) what are we to make of the God who stays in power when we break the covenant, that is when we transfer our ultimate concern elsewhere. We may decide to acquit Tillich of the charge of subjectivism, but in that case we shall have to charge him with inconsistency.

The implications of this for the issue of the personality of God become very clear as the argument proceeds. It appears to be Tillich's view that these religious ideas have all had philosophical transformations, that is to say that in terms of his distinction between religion and philosophy the ways in which men have come to terms existentially with the meaning of being (religion) have their counterpart in various ways in which they have come to terms theoretically with the structure of being (philosophy). That which is experienced as ultimate in religion is that which is logically ultimate in philosophy, namely esse ipsum, Being-Itself. (ST I, p.230)¹ The tension between ultimacy and concreteness in

¹For Tillich's discussion of the distinction and relationship between philosophy and religion, see ST I pp.18-28.

religion is matched by the philosophical question, "how Being-Itself, if taken in its absolute sense, can account for the relativities of reality." (ST I p.231) To every religious answer which he has described previously there is a philosophical counterpart, culminating in the philosophical transformation which is possible for the final solution of the tension between concrete and ultimate in the religious terms of the trinitarian formula, and that transformation Tillich calls the "yes-no-yes" of Hegelian dialectical realism. (ST I p.234) It is his view that the idea of the movement of reality through the positive and the negative has its origin in, and conversely has lent support to, the dialectic of concrete and ultimate in trinitarian theology.

[These philosophical ideas] form an element in the history of religions because their own foundation is religious. Theology must deal with philosophical absolutes in both respects. It must ascertain their theoretical validity, which is a philosophical question, and it must seek their existential significance, which is a religious question. (ST I p.235)

The word "transformation" is, and he realizes this, full of dangers of various kinds. Very obviously, belief in the Hegelian dialectic is not the same as belief in the trinity, and a naturalistic monist is not the same as a pantheist. Tillich's point is only that the problems and the pressures are the same in both disciplines. Nonetheless, we must ask whether, even giving him the benefit of this point,

he is not relating the religious and philosophical enterprises more than they can be, or alternatively whether he is not constructing the theological enterprise in a sense which gives too much importance to the philosophical approach to understanding the structure of being. This, it need hardly be said, is a very basic issue between Barth and Tillich which will, therefore, best be left on one side until we have dealt entirely with Tillich's view and Barth's reply. Suffice it to say that it is the phenomenological approach to religion, coupled with a rationalistic approach to theology, which underlies Tillich's discussion of the "Meaning of God" (ST I pp.211-234); they are what lead inevitably to the words quoted at the beginning of this section (p.51) concerning the issue of this thesis, the personality of God.

Given the philosophical transformations of the object of ultimate concern, God cannot be classified with other beings, a classification which would make him finite, but has rather to be known only as Being-Itself. Even to call him the highest of beings is to diminish his ultimacy: "When applied to God, superlatives become diminutives. They place him on the level of other beings, while elevating him above them." (ST I p.235) To attribute to God, as a being, unconditioned power or infinite meaning, saves one from this error, for in the very fact of his omniscience, or omnipotence, or unconditioned freedom, he has ceased to be a being

and has become Being-Itself. Thus there can be no discussion about the existence of God (ST I p.239) for in any such discussion "the answer - whether negative or affirmative - implicitly ~~denies~~ the nature of God. It is as atheistic to affirm the existence of God as to deny it."

This line of argument, it should be noticed, bears considerable resemblance to the ontological argument for God, which is based on the inconceivability of his non-existence. It is true that Tillich is not arguing that the Christian God self-evidently is the true God, but only that everybody has an ultimate concern. I frankly doubt, however, whether most atheists would welcome conversion by definition in this way; there is, pace Tillich, no particular reason why everybody should be ultimately concerned about anything. Gods who cannot be doubted are gods of no consequence.

It is this line of argument, however, which lies at the root of Tillich's rejection of ~~the~~ idea of a personal God, a God that is to say who is a person. God is Being-Itself, not a being, and so, a fortiori, not a person. It does however turn out that Tillich regards it as legitimate to speak of God as personal, in a symbolic sense. Let us see what that involves.

"Life is the actuality of being." (ST I p.242) Tillich is in no doubt that God must be spoken of, for religious purposes, as the living God, but not in a proper sense. The

sense of "living" which is involved is necessarily a symbolic one because living involves becoming actually what one is potentially, and in the case of God there is no distinction between actuality and potentiality. So God must be spoken of as living in a symbolic sense if God is to live for man at all; but two points must be recognized: first, in speaking of God as living, there must be preserved a sense of the mystery involved, and therefore of the inadequacy of the words which are being used. Secondly, the theologian has the responsibility of going behind the symbolic terms in order to "analyse them and interpret them in abstract ontological terms" (ST I p.242) and so as to "explain and systematize the existential knowledge of revelation in theoretical terms, interpreting the symbolic significance of the ontological elements and categories." (ST I p.243)

Tillich makes it very clear that, for religious purposes, it is legitimate to describe God in personal terms, with all the tensions and attributes of human existence: but there is a reality behind the symbols to which it is the theologian's task to penetrate:

God is called a person, but he is not a person in finite separation but in an absolute and unconditional participation in everything. God is called dynamic, but he is dynamic not in tension with form but in an absolute and unconditional unity with form, so that his self-transcendence never is in tension with his self-preservation, so that he always remains God. ... In this way, although the symbolic terms used for the divine

life are taken from the situation of man's relationship to God, they imply God's ultimacy, the ultimacy in which the polarities of being disappear in the ground of being, in being-itself.
(ST I, pp.243-244)

The belief in the possibility of distinguishing between words used in a symbolic sense and words used in a proper sense pervades this part of the system, and so, implicitly, does the belief in the possibility, and so the necessity, of making some kind of statement about the reality behind the structure of being which is truly non-symbolic. Such a view is clearly the essential premiss of his conclusion that the symbol "personal God" has to be used with great caution, and in any case translated from theological into non-symbolic language, into the theoretical description of the structure of being.

In the light of all this, his words "'Personal God' does not mean that God is a person ..." are at once understandable and surprisingly dogmatic. Understandable, because after looking at the phenomenology of religion with its abundant warnings of the danger of concrete reference to the person of God, and having as his aim the interpretation of religious symbols into the language of ontology, it is natural enough to wish to discard the view that God is a person rather than risk misunderstanding. Surprising, because with that aim in view it should be possible to have some scepticism about the possible use of non-symbolic language, to doubt that is whether it

is really the task of theology to dig for some real ontology behind the symbols, whether such a task would be possible, and whether it is important in any case. It is belief in the possibility and the necessity of this kind of enterprise that leads a person to believe that he has finally reached real reality, beyond myth and symbol, a belief Tillich expresses about his (symbolic) expression 'Being-Itself'.

Furthermore, the following remarks, from the same paragraph, cast very serious doubt whether Tillich has really discovered accurately the meaning of the symbols he is examining:

It should not be forgotten that classical theology employed the term persona for the trinitarian hypostases but not for God himself. God became 'a person' only in the nineteenth century, in connection with the Kantian separation of nature ruled by physical law from personality ruled by moral law.

(ST I p.245)

It is indeed unfortunate that discussion of the personality of God is complicated by the fact of the misleading English translation of the misleading Latin translation of hypostasis. This, however, is not the issue. The discussion is about God, not as personal but as person. The problem is not a

¹For Barth on the problems caused by the translation of hypostasis by persona and translation of that in turn by the English word person, see CD II,1 p.288. He points out that, pace Tillich above, the 19th century was the beginning of attacks on the idea of a personal God, the idea itself being a well-established part of the tradition. (CD II,1 pp.289-297)

Kantian creation, though it is true that a radical separation of nature from personality did threaten to transform (in what was in my view a regrettable way) our understanding of God as person. The issue is how and whether we can continue to describe and worship God as person as he has traditionally been; and if we can continue to do so, how should we understand what we are doing?

Apart from these questions about Tillich's relating the problem of the personality of God to nineteenth-century philosophical developments in a very regrettable way, the major questions about Tillich's analysis are: does his approach, that of transforming phenomenologically discovered religious symbols into ontological categories pre-judge the answers he obtains, and, if so, in the right or wrong direction? Is the aim of effecting such a translation a fruitful way of interpreting the theological undertaking? And is his conclusion on the specific question of a personal God first of all coherent and secondly true? I shall have some remarks to make at the end of this chapter about all of these questions, but at this point we should consider Barth's in many ways opposing analysis.

The Person of God Revealed.

Our subject is God and not being, or being only as the being of God. ... We are not concerned with a concept of being that is common, neutral and free to

choose, but with one which is from the first filled out in a quite definite way. And this concretion cannot take place arbitrarily, but only from the Word of God, as it has already occurred and has been given to us in the Word of God. This means that we cannot discern the living God in any other way than by looking where God himself gives us Himself to see (CD II,1 pp.260-261)

Barth answers our first question often and always unequivocally. The bible does not approach God through the phenomenology of religion, or ontology, or metaphysics; so they should not figure in our approach. We have already seen that his aim is quite different from Tillich's, a point he has occasion to reiterate when he comes to deal with the doctrine of God:

It is therefore the Church's commission, which the science of dogmatics has also to serve in its own way, that taught and bound by the Word of God and for the sake it (for it has no other raison d'être than to serve the Word of God), it has to say that God is. (CD II,1 p.258)

He would therefore be most unwilling to accept that any of the extensive arguments of Tillich which were examined were at all to the point. He has a lengthy excursus (CD II,1 pp.287-297), a fine piece of Barthian polemical scholarship, in which he examines all the arguments of the opponents of the "God as Person" idea, and in it appear two sentences which might well have been written as replies to Tillich's phenomenology:

This arrangement [of considering the Trinity after the general issue of the nature and attributes of God] led to the temptation of speaking of God apart from His revelation, and therefore apart from His Being. ... The result was an involuntary movement away from the school of Scripture into that of heathen antiquity. (CD II,1 p.288)

Barth's clarity on the question of approach to dogmatic questions is not at first sight matched by an equal clarity on the question, a vital one in the issue with which we are concerned, of the extent to which Language about God as person is symbolic language. There are some occasions where he seems to say, clearly and emphatically, that this use of personal language is to be taken literally, as descriptive of the being of God. In one of these he is speaking of the use of the word "living" to describe God, a use which Tillich insisted was symbolic:

We recall in this connexion the emphatic Old and New Testament description of God as "the living God". This is no metaphor. Nor is it a mere description of God's relation to the world and to ourselves. But while it is that, **it also describes God Himself as the One He is.** ... God really lives. (CD II,1 p.263)

In another place, on the specific issue of God as person, he makes the same point:

The personal way in which Scripture speaks is not in any way naive or childish or anthropomorphic. ... The personal way in which Holy Scripture speaks corresponds absolutely and exclusively to the fact that God is not something but someone, the One from Whom man merely holds in fee the possibility of being one himself. (CD II,1 p.286)

This impression is to some degree confirmed by the passage (CD II,1 pp.223-243) in which he deals with the analogical character of all theological language.¹ The analogy, however must not be construed as the analogia entis of traditional natural theology, which Barth regards as "the invention of ~~Antichrist~~" (CD I,1 p.x) but rather an analogy "which is created by the work and action of God himself, ~~the~~ analogy which has its actuality from God and from God alone." (CD II, 1 p.83) What this appears to mean, as we shall see later, is that for Barth words are used literally of God and of man only by analogy.² It is one of the greatest criticisms of Barth that he frequently makes remarks of that kind, which one can only describe as perverse, without ever clarifying his meaning or acknowledging the problems in his approach.

On the other hand, he does say at one point that "not only some but all human standpoints and concepts, even those used by Scripture, are 'anthropomorphic'" (CD II,1 p.265). This seems, tantalizingly, to open the door for a symbolic interpretation, but it turns out that his point is merely that since all theological language is of this kind, there

¹For a discussion of this point, see the section on "Analogia Entis" in Thomas, O.C.: "Barth on Non-Christian Knowledge of God" (Anglican Theological Review, XLVI, July, 1964) pp.261-285.

²Barth makes this point in specific response to Tillich in CD I,1 p.150.

is neither point nor possibility in attempting the Tillichian 'transformation' enterprise. This means that for Barth it is ~~true~~ to the same extent and in the same sense to speak of God as 'person' as to speak of him as 'Being-Itself' or ~~any~~any other kind of theological idiom.

There is a brief excursus of great significance for our study (CD I p.266) where he asks whether, since the bible speaks of God's eyes and strong right arm, we should be committed to taking a great deal of the scriptures figuratively. Indeed, he asks, would anything be left to be taken literally? His own answer is clear enough; there is no way to explain Holy Scripture if it is supposed that we can set some concepts on one side as figurative over against others which we call literal or univocal. Accordingly, "the reality of the natural component of the divine being indicated [in Holy Scripture] should in its place and in proper proportion be taken just as seriously as the undeniable spiritual reality." (CD II, 1 p.266, my underlining).

Even this, however, is not clear. Not only do the underlined words raise important questions, but the word which he introduces to describe the way in which we should interpret the scriptures, which is opposed to both "literally" and "figuratively", namely "theologica", is never really elucidated. It appears that the point is the inevitably mysterious nature of all theological language; given that there will never be,

by the very nature of the subject matter, a kind of theological language which can be called 'literal', there is no point in trying to look for the 'spiritual truth' behind the biblical language about God. What is more, once that proviso has been made about all theological language, the doctrine of God as person stands on an equality with all other parts of the revelation, as truth. It is as though the word "God", or the theological context, were a multiplier outside a bracketed mathematical formula; then within the bracket would fall all our theological discourse, and the whole of Scripture; every part of the language is affected the same way, and none more than any other.

It is clear from this that Barth cannot accept the conclusion at which Tillich arrives about the personality of God, a conclusion which Barth regards as a simple departure from the divine revelation of God as Person. He would say that there is a better way in which Tillich could protect himself from misunderstanding when, for religious purposes, he speaks of God as personal; it is by an understanding of the nature and limitations of our knowledge of God that we can be saved from concentrating on the wrong aspects of the idea of personality when it is attributed to God. It is important to see that this would be the basis of his answer, and not the idea that "man has to describe the truest and best in his existence on the basis of this concept" (CD II,1 p.291) and must

for that reason alone use personal categories about God. In Barth's view, such attempts at argument on the basis of man's linguistic needs have always sold out to the opposition before they even begin. To accept the personality of God on the premisses of the Enlightenment is no better than to reject it. The issue for him is one of truth and not rhetoric, one of faith and not one of communication. Humanists cannot defend religion.

An example of the lengths to which Barth goes in this is his opposition to those who take the words "God is love" (I Jn. 4:8) as a definition, thereby claiming that God is not personal. He claims (CD II,1 p.275) that on purely exegetical grounds the verse cannot be interpreted in this way. What it means rather is that love is a necessary aspect of the personality, necessary not because God is under some external compulsion to love, but because it is part of his nature.

Barth claims much more than we have said so far in his rejection of any redefinition of God's personality by spiritualizing it or by changing the meaning of the word person.

We reject a false spiritualizing on the one hand and a false realism on the other, and have to understand God's being as "being in person". What is meant is certainly not personified being but the being that in the reality of its person realizes and unites in itself the fulness of all being. In its person means in its unity of spirit and nature. For in this unity, in the due superiority of its spirituality, in the due inferiority of its naturalness, it is not an "It", nor is it a "He" like a created person. It is genuinely ... always an "I". It is the I who knows about Himself, who Himself wills, Himself disposes and distinguishes, and in this very act of His omnipotence is wholly self-sufficient. (CD II,1 p.268)

So God's personality consists in his being the true subject of every event (the I BRING TO PASS of the bible).

The ~~quotation~~ is of further interest, however, because in it Barth does attempt a definition of person which might, at first sight at least, help us to understand his assertion of God's personality somewhat better. "Person" for Barth is the unity of spirit and nature. Is Barth here conceding the usefulness of a philosophical and psychological definition in understanding and communicating revealed truth? It is hard to see how he could, given his views on the method of dogmatics. The suspicion that he cannot be making that concession is confirmed by such remarks as the following:

The definition of a person, that is a knowing, willing, acting I, can have the meaning only of a confession of the person of God declared in His revelation, of the One Who loves and Who as such (loving in His own way) is the person. God is what man can never be in himself, what man himself can only understand as he looks to Him, admitting that of himself he does not know what he means when he says it. Man is not a person, but he becomes one on the basis that he is loved by God and can love God in return. (CD II,1 p.284)

For example, the words, "father", and "son" do not first and properly have their truth at the point of reference to the underlying views and concepts in our thought and language, i.e. in their application to the two nearest male members ~~in~~ the succession of physical generation of man or of animal creation generally. They have it first and properly at a point to which, as our words, they cannot refer at all, but to which, on the basis of the grace of the revelation of God, they may refer ... - in their application to God, in the doctrine of the Trinity. (CD II,1 p.229)

That concepts are applied to God univocally or literally as this suggests, and to man only by analogy not only ~~fails~~ as a conclusion to assist us in our task ~~of~~ elucidating the meaning of the personality of God, but it presents serious logical difficulties of its own. If we know what it is to be a person only because God's revelation of himself has shown us what it is to be a person, the question arises how we were able to receive God's revelation of his personal being in the first place. How were we to know, when he revealed himself to us as person, to which characteristics of himself he was referring? It may be true that, given a human understanding of personality which was perhaps faulty in some respects, God's revelation of himself as having those characteristics and some ~~others~~, or else those characteristics to perfection, which we men understood as ~~be~~longing to personality, might have improved our insight into true or perfect personality; but it cannot be true that we ~~had~~ no idea what a person was until God showed us himself. This of course is Barth's problem throughout his theology: if all we know of the categories we use about God came from God in the first place, how did the process get started?

Before dealing with that and other points in my concluding remarks to this chapter, there are some salient features of Barth's analysis which should be reiterated. In speaking of God as person he is, one is always aware, cognizant of the fact that he is dealing with the mystery of mysteries.

His language is strong and assured, and yet he knows that to speak of God as person is to speak of something we can never entirely comprehend. Secondly, he seems to be conscious, though he does not talk about it specifically, that there is a problem involved in making clear, in calling God person, that he is not separated from the world. His words about God as the one who acts and the one who loves are ways of declaring his presence in all things. On this point, he is in a way stronger than Tillich who regards God's ~~love~~ for and action in the world as metaphorical expressions. For Barth, God has revealed himself as person, the one who is.

The Issues Remain

Barth and Tillich evidently agree that personal categories are applied to God in a different sense from that in which they are applied to men, but for the ~~former~~ this is because they are literally applied to God and analogically to men, and for the latter the reverse is true.

On that point, it is hard to agree with Barth that the impressive phenomenological investigation we found in Tillich is totally irrelevant to our concern in the theological undertaking. That is not just because it makes good reading. Revelation is not just an objective event "out there": it implies a hearer equipped to understand it, and some common ground between the one who reveals himself and the one who re-

receive the revelation. This is not to argue for God's dependence on men, but simply to take note of the fact, for a fact it is, that the revelation about which we are speaking was recorded by men on the basis of their experience, the point made at the end of the last chapter (p.45), and this suggests some common ground. Those who communicate the faith in our time are finding that matters connected with personality, with people and their natures and needs, are very much a part of that common ground. Barth's contribution lacks both the admission that such common ground exists (though unwittingly he makes use of it) and a thorough investigation of it.

This is not merely a logical point, but also a theological one. Grace works not in a vacuum, but on nature; such has been the faith of the Church, and that faith makes it hard to believe that the grace of revelation did not in fact work on the nature of our human understanding; if that is true, if what we are dealing with in interpreting the Christian faith is not pure grace but rather transformed nature, the study of nature is vital for theology. Nowhere does this apply more than in our understanding of personality, of men and of God. The two chapters which follow this are devoted to a study of the person as he has been understood by philosophers and psychologists of modern times, areas not covered by Tillich's phenomenological study. There is, however, something else we shall have to bear in mind as we do this.

The positivists' overthrow of metaphysics may indeed have been somewhat wholesale; but at least they have left us in no doubt that descriptions of non-empirical reality cannot be literally true in the same sense as scientific language can be. In his awareness that when we speak about God we do so theologice, Barth seems, whether consciously or not, to take this into account. Tillich is, in this respect, only aware of other people's limitation; we shall not succeed in understanding the tradition, let alone in communicating it, if we presume we are able to "get behind it" to the "real truth" the symbols are intended to convey.

Our aim, therefore, will be more modest: we seek only to retell the tradition of the personal God in terms which will allow us at the same time to investigate the ground we share with our contemporaries. Hermes was not asked to discern the "real" intentions of the gods or of men, but simply to carry messages: to do so, however, he had to listen very carefully, at both ends of the journey.

CHAPTER FOUR

PHILOSOPHICALLY SPEAKING

The twin problems of ontology and epistemology, of what is and how we know, have naturally enough found expression in the philosophical quest for an understanding of the human person. That such a quest was undertaken in the first place is not especially surprising; when we attempt to comprehend the reality about us, we are immediately confronted with the reality of ourselves, and we know that we are persons. We have a sense, that is to say, that we resemble other human beings and differ from the animals and objects in our environment not merely in the way that televisions resemble televisions and differ from sewing machines, namely in physical characteristics and function or potential, but in some other and more important way also. That other difference has, as we shall see, proved remarkably difficult to define, but we know that it has something to do with our capacity to experience, that is to see a television or appreciate the work of a sewing machine, our capacity to choose between television channels, and, perhaps more than any other, our capacity to reflect rationally about such questions as the very one we are now considering. We are not aware that these capacities reside in frogs or bicycles.

In the light of what we know now about computers, and even of what we know about frogs, that is obviously to put the

matter far too simply; we are becoming constantly more aware that the line between the sub-human and the human is by no means a clear one. This however does not help us at all in solving the ontological problem, the problem of "personal identity" as it is called, which is, "What is a person ?" Common sense, our everyday language and almost all western philosophers prior to 1700 are on the side of a dualistic analysis of personality, that is one which states a man to be a body, with physical attributes, functions and potentialities, together with a mind, which has the ability to experience, choose and reason. But, regrettable as it may be, the dualistic analysis presents great problems, as we shall see shortly when we examine Descartes.

In particular, we are confronted, not only by this dualistic analysis but also by our everyday language, which in a way reflects it, with the epistemological question, known to philosophers as the problem of "other minds"; that is, briefly, "While I can know introspectively my own capacity to experience, to choose and to reason, how can I possibly know, in the case of other people, anything besides physical characteristics, since their minds are, by definition, that aspect of them which is not open to observation ? So how can I know that mine is not the only mind, and that therefore I am not the only person in the world, and so, that the other "people" whom I see around me are not mere machines whose appearances and functions are similar to mine, but who have no mental attributes whatever ?"

Crisis for Dualism

I went on to describe the rational soul, and showed that, unlike the other things I had spoken of, it cannot be extracted from the potentiality of matter, but must be specially created; and how it is not enough for it to dwell in the human body like a pilot in his ship, which would only account for its moving the limbs of the body; in order to have in addition feelings and appetites like ours, and so make up a true man, it must be joined and united to the body more closely.¹ (Discourse on Method, pt. II)¹

I must confess that I could more readily allow that the soul has matter and extension than that an immaterial being has the capacity of moving a body and being affected by it. If the first [the soul's moving the body] took place by [the soul's giving] information [to the body], then the [animal] spirits which carry out the movement would have to be intelligent; but you do not allow intelligence to anything corporeal. (Princess Elizabeth to Descartes, June 1643)²

Although the Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia is not one of the most prominent figures in the history of philosophy, there is no doubt that her questions to Descartes on the relationship of the mind to the body are both persistent and appropriate. The famous proposition (and an obscure one) of which he first comes to be absolutely certain is 'cogito ergo sum', 'I am experiencing and so I exist', implies that the part of himself of which he can be sure is the part which is

¹Descartes, R.: Philosophical Writings, ed. and Trans. by Anscombe, E. & Geach, P.T. (London, Nelson, 1954)*. On this issue see also the second of his Meditations on First Philosophy, ibid. pp.66-75. (*p. 43)

²ibid. p.278. For the whole correspondence between the Princess and Descartes, see ibid. pp.274-286.

not physical, the soul (or mind). Not only is the existence of the body far less certain than that of the mind, but it is quite conceivable to him that his mind, and that for Descartes means he, could exist without his body, or even in that of some other person. So for him the connection between the mind and the body is ~~Not~~ logically necessary, but only causal and contingent: it could be otherwise. What the Princess quite properly wants to know is how this causal connection could possibly work in a situation where one of the items in the relationship, the mind, has no extension; the only kind of causation she can conceive is one involving impact of some kind, and there can be no impact with something non-physical.

We might not choose these particular terms in which to ask the question, but it is certainly the question to ask a dualist. Descartes flounders considerably at her question, and when in his reply he says, "I would askeyour Highness to hold yourself free to ascribe 'matter and extension' to the soul; for this is nothing else than to conceive the soul as united to the body"¹, there is no doubt that he has simply ~~gi~~ given up the struggle. For what he is now saying, namely that the body is the 'matter and extension' of the soul, ~~m~~akes the body-soul connection no longer causal but logical; and in that case, despite his attempts to eat his cake and have it, my soul can only exist in my body.

¹ibid. p.281.

It was nearly a century later that David Hume had his Treatise of Human Nature published (London, 1739), but his difficulty with Descartes' position came much earlier in the argument. Like Descartes he began with that which could be introspected, but found it far less easy than Descartes to reason his way to certainty about the existence of anything apart from what could be introspected, namely [sensory] impressions and the ideas which the impressions left in the memory. For that reason he was extremely sceptical about the existence of any kind of object, let alone our physical bodies. On the existence of the mind, of which Descartes had been so certain, Hume was in complete disagreement.

There are some philosophers, who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our SELF [the mind]; that we feel its existence and its continuation in existence; and are certain ... both of its identity and simplicity. ... Unluckily all these positive assertions are contrary to that very experience, which is pleaded for them, nor have we any idea of self, after the manner it is here explain'd. For from what impression cou'd this idea be deriv'd? ... For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. (Treatise of Human Nature, Bk. I, Pt. IV, 6)

We may well suspect that Hume was misinterpreting that which his opponents had claimed to have discovered within themselves;

¹Hume, David: A Treatise of Human Nature, Being an Attempt to introduce the experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects (ed. Selby-Bigge, L.A., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1896)

be that as it may, the application of the "experimental method" could hardly lead to any other conclusion, for our sensory impressions are all either of objects outside ourselves or else of feelings of various kinds inside ourselves, and in either case they are not of our "selves".

If there is nothing but a succession of impressions and ideas, the problem of personal identity becomes impossible to solve. A person becomes a bundle of succeeding impressions and ideas, but on what basis are we to tie up the bundle? The only unifying factor could be another impression or idea, but how could we incorporate it into the bundle? We should be left with an infinite regress, and it is little wonder that Hume gives up completely on this problem: "... all the nice and subtle questions concerning personal identity," he concludes, "can never possibly be decided, and are to be regarded rather as grammatical than as philosophical difficulties."¹ Unfortunate as it may be, philosophical problems cannot simply be told to go away, and the discussion has continued: but Hume's radical scepticism has meant that subsequent philosophers have generally wanted to solve the problem of personal identity on a monistic, rather than a dualistic, basis.

¹ibid. p. 262. It has been said that Hume was a monist who attempted the reduction of body to mind (see Ayer, A.J.: "The Concept of a Person" in The Concept of a Person and Other Essays (London, Macmillan, 1963) pp.82-128) but this is misleading unless it is realized that Hume was as sceptical about the existence of "the mind" as of the body: what he did was to reduce everything, and not only persons, to mental events.

The Ghost Will Not Be Laid

For a time it really seemed as though the reduction of the person to the physical might, especially with the rise of experimental psychology, be accomplished with not too much difficulty, and the "behaviourists" as they were known seemed to be capable of explaining the person as a unity. So that in 1884, William James, a leading behaviourist, could boldly write:

Our natural way of thinking about these standard emotions [fear etc.] is that the mental perception of some fact excites the mental affection called the emotion, and that this latter state of mind gives rise to the bodily expression. My thesis on the contrary is that the bodily changes follow directly the PERCEPTION of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur is the emotion. (What is an Emotion? pp.189-190)

If we fancy some strong emotion, and then try to abstract from it all the feelings of its characteristic bodily symptoms, we find we have no "mind-stuff" of which the emotion could be constituted, and that a cold state of ~~intellectual~~ intellectual perception is all that remains. (ibid. p.193, my underlining)¹

Although there are mental events other than emotions to be accounted for, it was hoped that some explanation on the same model could be found for them too. In the intervening years, however, this theory of emotion² has been experimentally dis-

¹James, William: "What is an Emotion?" (Mind, Old Series IX, 1884, pp.188-205). See also his Principles of Psychology (New York, Holt, 1890).

²For the main features of this so-called "James-Lange Theory of Emotion", see Stevens, S.S.: Handbook of Experimental Psychology (New York, Wiley, 1951) pp.501-503. The following sections of Stevens show the later history of the theory.

proved, and we now know that it is possible for a person to be afraid, hungry, thirsty and so forth without his having the capacity to show the usual physical responses.

Even so, more recent attempts have been made to effect the reduction of the person to the physical. Generally, the attempts are not stated in those terms because the objections to mechanistic theories such as those just described are well known. Whether the theories are different in substance is another matter. Relying far more on the procedures of linguistic analysis, than on the discoveries of psychology, Gilbert Ryle, an example of a modern monist, attempts to show that "mind" and "body" are simply names for groups of linguistic categories which we use to describe human beings and their actual or potential behaviour.

To find that most people have minds (though idiots and infants in arms do not) is simply to find that they are able and prone to do certain ~~sorts~~ sorts of things, and this we do by witnessing the sorts of things they do. (p.61)

But this is neither James' solution nor Hume's:

The 'reduction' of the material world to mental states and processes, as well as the 'reduction' of mental states and processes to physical [ones] presuppose the legitimacy of the disjunction 'Either there exist minds or there exist bodies (but not both)'. It would be like saying, 'Either she bought a left-hand glove and a right-hand glove or she bought a pair of gloves (but not both).' (pp.22-23)¹

¹The illustrations of Ryle's thought are from Ryle, G.: The Concept of Mind (London, Hutchinson's University Library, 1949).

The solution of the relationship of mind to body by suggesting that they are merely different ways of talking about the same thing has an attractive simplicity and Ryle is very thoroughgoing in applying it to most of the descriptions of people and their behaviour which we call mental. The theory is attractive for the further reason that, in addition to its solution of the ontological question, it makes short work of the problem of "other minds". Since "the mind" is simply the name for the way we describe a certain group of events, to know that there are 'other minds' is neither more difficult nor more simple than to know that there are thunderstorms or 'unidentified flying objects'; everybody is sure there are thunderstorms, while many people are not sure there are u.f.o.'s, and in the same way we shall sometimes be sure we are in the presence of an "other mind" and at other times not, not because we are or are not in possession of enough evidence to justify belief in the presence of an unobservable, hidden reality but because we have or have not seen the kinds of behaviour we ordinarily talk about in mental terms.

However not all philosophical problems can be disposed of by suggesting that they originate in linguistic confusion, and this is one that cannot. To point out that Descartes' view of the mind is that of a "ghost in a machine", which provides us with no way of describing how the ghost is related to the machine or of knowing when we can infer the presence of a

ghost from the behaviour of any particular machine, is easy enough: "Men are not machines, not even ghost-ridden machines. They are men - a tautology which is sometimes worth remembering."¹ But it is also worth remembering what the original problem was; Descartes raises the question how the mind can be related to the body and how we can know that there are other minds: Ryle leaves us wondering how we can describe the same events in empirical, physical terms on the one ~~hand~~ and in private, mental terms on the other, and also how we can be justified in employing the second group of terms about events which can be adequately described in the first. The reader may well detect some resemblance between the two sets of questions even if the terms are different, and indeed in the case of Ryle we find ourselves not only without adequate reason for talking about other minds, but also without adequate reason for talking about our own. Personal identity is not, as we saw with Hume, a purely "grammatical" question; there is some reason to doubt whether the ghost has been laid while everyone is still convinced that the machine is haunted.

For example, a number of philosophers since Ryle have devoted their attention to the activities of the ghost, as against his feelings and experiences. Considering a dialogue between Empiricus (clearly a friend of Ryle's) and Philonous (whose machine is still haunted), Ewing is left with the con--

¹ibid. p.81.

clusion that what he calls "mental acts", such things as believing, knowing and understanding and, in particular, such conative acts as wanting and attending, cannot adequately be translated into feelings of certain kinds or actual or potential physical action.¹ As we shall see shortly, action is indeed an important aspect of what we call "mind"; and if that be so, then the ghost has certainly not been laid to rest.

Living with the Problem

If the analysis of our language about persons fails to resolve, or rather dissolve, the problem of personal identity, we shall still be able to put it to use. In the end, even if we are unable to solve it, it is both possible and useful to have a clear idea what it is about our everyday language about persons which gives rise to such philosophical puzzlement, and why it is that, as a matter of fact, we manage to use this language most of the time without being puzzled at all.

In this regard, one of the most interesting recent suggestions has been that of P. F. Strawson.² It is his view that the reason why both dualistic (e.g. Descartes) and 'reductionist' (e.g. Ryle) analyses of personal identity are un-

¹See Ewing, A.C.: "Mental Acts" (Mind, New Series LVII, 1948, pp.201-220); also Geach, P.T.: Mental Acts; Their Contents and Their Objects (New York, Humanities Press, 1957)

²Strawson, P.F.: "Persons", chapter III in Individuals; an Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics (London, Methuen, 1959)

successful is that 'person' is a 'primitive concept' incapable of any kind of analysis. Far from its being the case that personal identity can be described in terms of mind and body, the concepts of mind and body are themselves analysable only in terms of the prior concept of person. The meaning of this becomes clearer when we examine its implications for the problem of our knowledge of "other minds". Dualistic theorists have generally said that we can argue for the existence of other minds as follows:

- Premiss 1: I possess a body which acts in certain ways.
- Premiss 2: Others have bodies which appear and act in similar ways.
- Premiss 3: I am introspectively aware of certain mental experiences and capacities which parallel my physical behaviour and capacities.
- ∴ Conclusion: Others have similar mental experiences and capacities which parallel their physical behaviour and capacities.

The weakness of the connection between the premisses of this argument and its conclusion is notorious: as a deduction it clearly does not hold, and as an induction, a scientific generalization, it seems quite irresponsible for me to base so general a conclusion on the single case for which I have evidence, namely my own. It is known as the argument by analogy and has been accepted, widely though with great reluctance, as an account of what we do in our everyday situations.

Strawson's description of 'person' as a 'primitive concept' is intended to cut across the difficulties of this weak argument by suggesting that if I did not have a concept of

'person' which I could apply to other people, I could never apply it to myself; in this way, he does not allow the question of how we 'argue' for the existence of other minds even to arise: it is from our observation of others that we come to know what a person is, and therefore our reasons for concluding that there are "other minds" are bound to be logically adequate.

Two questions arise: first of all what is it in my observations of others which gives me the concept of a person? In his answer to this, which does not claim to be exhaustive, Strawson echoes very strongly the view of Stuart Hampshire that it is the fact that we act on each other which makes most strongly for our having the concept of a person:

The deepest mistake in empiricist theories of perception, descending from Berkeley and Hume, has been the representation of human beings as passive observers..... In fact, I find myself from the beginning able to act upon objects around me. ... I not only perceive my body, I also control it; I not only perceive external objects, I also manipulate them.¹

From the point of ~~view~~ of our study, this will be a very important point to bear in mind. But the second question is how can what we observe in ourselves and others justify us in our general application of the concept of a person, which is just another version of the problem of knowing that there are other minds. On this point, it seems to me, Strawson does

¹Hampshire, Stuart: Thought and Action (London, Chatto and Windus, 1959) p.47.

no more than affirm that the observations are logically adequate: he claims to have dispensed with the argument from analogy and at the same time not to have adopted Ryle's position (which would make the observations of others entail that there were other minds), and yet he has not given any clear account of his own, as Ayer points out.¹ What Strawson has done, and this is what is of interest from our point of view, is to shed a new light on how it is that we come by our concept of a person. The attempts of others to furnish a logical justification for that procedure can now be briefly examined.

The tendency at this time undoubtedly is for philosophers to accept the logic of our everyday language, and therefore to stop short of saying that mental descriptions are simply certain kinds of physical descriptions. On the other hand they have been loath to postulate the existence of "the mind" as a separate substance existing alongside the body and related in some way to it. They have said that a person's identity consists in his body, and it is simply a contingent fact that certain experiences are causally related to states of that body. That certainly appears to be Ayer's view in the essay to which we have referred.

There is, however, a difficulty in this approach, in that much of our talk about persons implies a continuity, an existence of some kind in the realm of the mental as well as of the

¹Ayer, A.J.: op. cit. p.95-104.

physical; my 'self', my 'mind', my 'personality' has an existence as well as¹ my body. Thus we find some plausibility in Leibniz' sentiment, quoted by Thomson:²

Of what use would it be to you, Sir, to become the king of China on condition of forgetting all you have been ? Would it not be the same as if God, at the same time as he destroyed you, created a king in China ? (p.344)

And we all know how to make sense of Yeats' lines, "... only God, my dear, Could love you for yourself alone And not your yellow hair" without postulating some mysterious "self" which exists like a mysterious, inaccessible little man inside her head and which God ~~alone~~ finds more lovable than her yellow hair; indeed we should want to say that her "self" is not a part of her like her hair, and that is why we write "your hair" and "yourself" and not "yourhair" or "your self".

If the fact of continuity in both our private experience and in our characteristic behaviour is what leads us in our everyday talk about persons to speak about "the mind", the "self", the "personality" and so on as though they existed in a way similar to the way in which the body exists, there are reasons, not perhaps as conclusive as we should like, but good reasons for our belief in "other minds", reasons which take account all the factors to which Ryle, Strawson, Hampshire and

¹"As well as", not "apart from": I am not raising the question of disembodiment, nor do I regard it as relevant.

²Thomson, J.F.: "The Argument from Analogy and Our Knowledge of Other Minds" (Mind, New Series LX, 1951, pp.336-350)

Ayer have drawn our attention. Accounts are given of them by both Thomson and Allen¹ and their different emphases are most instructive. The latter emphasizes our observation of the active aspect of other people, and in particular the active aspect which is involved in our communication to each other of our cognitive experiences. I cannot have your experiences and you cannot have mine ("I cannot sit inside your head")², and so for us to experience each other in the way we do implies acts of will. That means, among other things, that it is possible for us to lie to each other, in a way that objects cannot. Thus, acquiring the concept of a person implies noticing in one the capacity to act, and whenever we call somebody a person or use personal terms about him it is to this capacity for will and intentional action that we refer.³

Thomson, on the other hand, points out quite rightly that we could never know that another person had the capacity to act unless we also had the possibility open to us of knowing what that person was experiencing; we have to know not only what they are doing, but also what is being done to them. To take

¹Thomson, J.F.: op. cit. Allen, A.H.B., see "Other Minds" (Mind, New Series LXI, 1952, pp.328-348)

²This argument would hold even if telepathy made it possible for me to know what experiences you were having. Your experiences remain yours and do not become mine even when you can communicate them, and, I can receive them, extra-sensorily.

³Consider, on the negative side, that it is when a man ceases to be able to respond or act at all that we call him a 'vegetable'. He may indeed be experiencing (which makes him all the worse off) but he ceases to be personal when he cannot act.

an example Allen uses, if I see a man in a dentist's chair and the dentist drilling his teeth, and if I hear the man screaming, it is the combination of the dentist's drill cutting into the man's teeth and the screams of the man which are my evidence for saying that it is a person I see in the dentist's chair (rather than a robot designed to make screaming noises at the touch of dentists' drills). This combination is what enables me to identify with this man, to "put myself in his place" and therefore assume that he is feeling the kind of pain I felt in a similar situation. Or if I see a man in the same situation not screaming but with his skin stretched white over his knuckles that I can surmise that he is suppressing his screams by a voluntary effort of the will. Thus the "analogy" by which I argue for his "having a mind" or "being a person" is the stronger because the analogy involves both active and passive experiences.

Neither Allen's argument nor Thomson's serves fully to account for the relationship we assume between the observable events (the drill and the scream) and private mental experience (the man's pain), nor do ~~they~~ conclusively answer the sceptics' questions concerning our knowledge of other minds; but they do show how we manage to live with those problems without too much trouble in our everyday life. We observe, it seems, between what is done publicly to a person and the way he publicly responds, a link which is not simply to be described in mechan-

istic terms because each knows that in his own case such a description does not suffice. We also observe about these links that in the case of any one person they exhibit a certain pattern, even if that pattern is sometimes mysterious and unpredictable; this continuity in a person's responses leads us to be able, for all the puzzles involved, to speak of a man's mind, of a man's personality.

Personal Identity and the Question of God

I believe it can be shown that the way in which we speak of persons is a remarkably appropriate model for the way in which God and his relationship to the world has been described in the Jewish and Christian traditions. In order to discuss this with greater clarity, I am going to list a number of propositions which reflect the conclusions to which we have come in our examination of the philosophy of personal identity; these propositions are lettered "P". With each of the "P" propositions I have paired a "T" proposition which the reader will, I hope, recognize as emerging from the theological concerns in the earlier chapters of this thesis, and which in my view corresponds closely to its corresponding "P" proposition.

P 1: Given that we speak of the "mind" and the "body" it is necessary to give an account of how they are related.
 T 1: Given that we speak of "God" and the "created world" it is necessary to give an account of how they are related.

P 2: Given that the mind of another person is by definition immaterial and therefore inaccessible to direct observ-

ation it is not clear how we could be sure that there exists an "other mind".

T 2: Given that God is by definition non-material and therefore inaccessible to direct observation¹ it is not clear how we could be certain that God exists.

P 3: P 1 cannot be answered if the mind is conceived of as an independent thing totally separate from the body (the view of Descartes).

T 3: T 1 cannot be answered if God is conceived of as an independent substance totally separate from the world (what we might call a Platonic view, which is, interestingly, reflected in Descartes' own view of God).

P 4: On the other hand, P 1 cannot be evaded by making mind simply the name for a bundle of separate experiences (Hume): ~~the~~ question of mind is how can these experiences be given a basis of unity.

T 4: On the other hand, T 1 cannot be evaded by making God simply the name for a bundle of [religious] experiences: the question of God is ~~how~~ those experiences can be given a basis of unity.

P 5: Nor can P 1 be foreclosed by making mind simply a name for certain actions and potential actions of the body (Ryle and the behaviourists).

T 5: Nor can T 1 be foreclosed by making God simply a name for certain actions and potential actions in the world (Pantheism: Spinoza's phrase "Deus sive natura").

P 6: A principal way in which we come to be aware of other minds is by our observations of ~~the~~ way in which others act towards us and we towards them. (Strawson, Hampshire)

T 6: A principal way in which we come to be aware of God is by our observations of the way in which he acts towards us and we towards him.² (Jahwist)

P 7: Much of what we say about people implies a continuity in the characteristics of their mind.

T 7: Much of what we say about reality implies a continuity in the nature of God.

P 8: We recognize that our knowledge of other minds depends on their voluntary communication of themselves to us. (Allen)

T 8: We recognize that our ~~our~~ knowledge of God depends on his voluntary communication of himself to us. (Revelation)

¹"No man has ever seen God;... ²... if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us."
(I John: 4:12)

P 9: In addition to our observations of the actions of others, we are also aware of what state of affairs provoked those responses; it is this combination which gives us knowledge of their minds. (Thomson)

T 9: In addition to our observations of the events of our life, we are also able to see what brings about those events; it is the combination which enables us to see them as responses by God which give us access to our knowledge of him. (cf. Amos' role in describing the reasons for Assyria's impending conquest of Samaria, Amos 2:6-16)

This outline is indeed very schematic and allusive, but these rather bald statements have, it is hoped, been given sufficient foundation in what has been said earlier, in the case of the "P" propositions in this chapter, and in the case of the "T" propositions in the previous ones. Taken together, they appear to add up to a considerable basis for conceiving of the relationship of God to the world as that between the mind and the body, or, to put it in a mathematical fashion:

Mind : Body :: God : World.¹

If this is correct, when we, as persons, relate to God, that relationship will be like our relationship to an "other mind". If we say that, we shall not be surprised to find that that relationship has certain features and provokes certain kinds of puzzlement, in ways we have already noted.

¹It must be made very clear that what are being identified are two relationships, and not the members of the relationships (i.e., it would not follow that Mind = God and Body = World). This scheme is said to hold where Mind and Body make up together the whole of a person, and God and World together make up all that there is. I have not called the relationships "analogous" but the same. This is because I believe the argument justifies that conclusion, and also because the word 'analogy' does not, in my view, at all merit the respect with which it is regarded by philosophers of religion. All language is

The correspondence between these two relationships is capable of development at some length, but I shall confine myself to a few illustrations designed to show why it is of importance that God be understood as personal and knowledge of him, therefore, as of the same kind as knowledge of other minds. The first has to do immediately with the epistemological point. It has been the witness of the orthodox Christian tradition from the first that knowledge of God was not the privilege of the intelligent, the well-educated, the leisured or even the religious; indeed there have been few more crucial theological battles in the history of the Church than that to declare false any understanding of the Christian life which implied that by the carrying out of certain defined procedures, true gnosis or knowledge of God could be guaranteed. It is not too much to say that if we make our knowledge of God like our knowledge of Greek or gravity, this battle will have been for nothing. It is only if we give an account of our knowledge of God as being personal that we can keep those things which we can learn about God by theological learning in their proper perspective; they are insignificant compared with the knowledge we receive from God, which is available first, apparently, to little children.

[from page 95] to some degree analogous: that is, to say that an object is a stone is to say that it is analogous in certain ways to other objects which have been classified as stones. In view of that fact about language as a whole, it seems to me most misleading to say religious language is "analogous" as if that made it special. I have avoided it wherever possible, therefore, using the word "analogous" at all.

The other illustrations I should like to mention are of a more ontological character. They concern the Incarnation, miracles in general and the problem of evil. We are aware, in our talk about persons, of occasions when we use language in curious ways. There is nothing particularly remarkable about saying that "Jones excels his brother" or "Jones is at odds with his brother", but what are we to make of remarks like "Jones excelled himself" and "Jones is at odds with himself" ? No less strange, for it implies that there are occasions when it is not true, is "Jones was really being himself". Or what are we to make of such remarks as "Jones killed the woman, but it was on a sudden impulse; it wasn't really Jones at all, not the Jones we know" ? We know that people can, when they are "being themselves", transcend their own limitations, and that when they are "at odds with themselves" they are incapable of realizing their most meagre potential.

All these expressions imply that we believe that even though all the actions in which Jones' body is involved are generally Jones' actions, it is possible for some to be more, and some to be less, in tune with what we call Jones' personality, or "the real Jones". Considering this further, my activities and experiences can be arranged along a spectrum, between those at the one end which are really as I intend them, which are "really mine", and those at the other end which run counter to all my real intentions and my best judgment, or

which, as in the case of experiences like physical sickness, I wish I could be rid of. In the middle will be a whole range of items, some of which are more or less "really mine" and some of which belong to the large group over which I either cannot or do not exercise any control with my mind, such as the digestion of my food or, generally, my rate of breathing.

Should we not ask, then, whether we do not find such a spectrum among the things and events of life? At the one end of the spectrum we find "evil", that which is contrary to the divine intention, and our reality at odds with itself. At the other end are the occasions when the pure divine intention is manifest in an event which can only be described as transcending the normal limitations of life as we know it. These occasions are the miracles, supremely the Incarnation itself when that Intention was made flesh. Between the two extremes again, we find a world of ambiguous choices or straightforward normal functioning.

One very important point must be made here, however, in case it seem to the reader that the problem of evil can be somehow "solved" in this way. Any description of God and his relationship to the world must have a "breaking-point", a point of inadequacy if it is to stand any chance of being true. Indeed it is important that any theological statement make its in-adequacy as clear as its strength. The breaking-point of the description of God's relationship to the world in terms of the

mind-body relationship is the doctrine of creation. We are at liberty to claim for ourselves that something we did or something we are experiencing is beyond our control, that we are not responsible: the doctrine of creation insists that God may have no such excuse. Our bodies are not totally under the control of consciousness (though the increasing use of words like 'psychosomatic' is evidence that we are finding more under our mental control than we had thought) but God is omnipotent and therefore he must be related as mind in total control. More than that, our minds do not create our bodies (though again they do so more than was thought): God is claimed to be the maker of everything that is. It is the claim that God is the omnipotent creator that raises the question why the world is not all Incarnation and miracle, why there is evil, why, if you will, the mind so often is absent from the body. It is this issue which more than any other leads men to ask whether there can after all be a God at all, whether the amount of suffering is not too much counterevidence.¹ In terms of our description, they ask whether if it is true that the world stands to God as body to mind there can be any excuse for the quantity of rank senselessness (Camus would call it absurdity) with which life appears to be replete.

¹For a discussion of the relationship of the problem of evil to the truth or falsity of God's existence, see "Theology and Falsification" by Antony Flew et al., in Flew, A. & MacIntyre, A. (eds.): New Essays in Philosophical Theology (London, S.C.M. Press, 1955), chapter VI.

Those for whom the recall of Incarnation and miracle, and of the commitment to which they were led thereby, is too strong for their faith to be shaken by evil, must wrestle with the question which had to be asked by successive generations of Hebrews, whether our understanding of the mind of God is in accord with the facts of our sometimes brutal experience. Reflection on that question will satisfy us that the mind of God, like our mind, is no mere "Mind" in the coldly rational, Stoic sense. To make sense of it, we must attribute to it feelings, motives, character, personality - all that is attributed to the mind of man. And the nature of the mind of man is a matter on which psychiatrists have more than philosophers to say.

Note to Chapter Four

This chapter was already in draft when I was made aware of a work which could with great profit have been incorporated into it, though to do so at this point would have made necessary a substantial revision of terms. In "God and the 'Private-I'" (Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, XX, 1960, pp.409-416), William H. Poteat raises a number of very searching questions about Ryle's Concept of Mind, with which we were concerned above, pp. 83-85. Poteat points out that what Ryle in fact does is to deny the need of the first person singular pronoun, or at least to deny that it functions in a way any different from the third person singular. Having said, for reasons very similar to the ones I give for retaining a concept of mind in some way distinct from that of body, that Ryle is mistaken on this point, Poteat says that the issue of God is really like the issue of whether "I" is a necessary word in the language and how we are to describe its function. In his terms, the question I am discussing is the nature of the "I" of reality; is there a subject of the events of nature and history? and what is he like?

CHAPTER FIVE

PROBING THE MYSTERY

The relatively large number of books devoted to the relationship between psychiatry and religion is testimony to the speed with which psychiatric theory and practice have gained a place in our culture, not only in revolutionizing our treatment of emotional suffering but also in changing our understanding of the meaning of the human person. Its development has been parallel to, although later than, advances in the other special sciences, and its effect on the human spirit has been very similar: we have been liberated from superstition about nature, in this case our own nature, and we have been given, it seems, a key with which to unlock the mysteries which remain. Theology, which has long capitalized on these mysteries, has been subjected to a very devastating attack, an attack which was made all the more difficult to endure by the knowledge that what we have seen so far is only the beginning.

The attack has been felt chiefly at two points, the doctrine of man and the nature of religion. To be meaningful at all, the traditional concepts of Christian anthropology, the fall, original sin, redemption and grace, must bear at least some resemblance to the empirical data of clinical psychology, and accordingly advances in psychiatry provide ever more material for the task of reinterpretation and, above all, ever more

tensions to be resolved. Most of the books to which I referred are concerned with these issues, primarily though not exclusively from a practical pastoral point of view.¹ On the other hand the psychiatric investigation of religion itself, chiefly as it appears in the symptoms of neurotic patients, has produced results shattering to the confidence of many religious people, and should be the occasion for a searching re-examination of the content of much that passes for religion.

The ~~relationship~~ between these two apparently different attacks is to be found in the personal nature of God. A shaking of our former understanding of persons must also shake our understanding of God. We can no longer accept the view held by philosophers until Descartes that a person has a real, unchanging essence which is ultimately mysterious, and, if, furthermore, we cannot return to the Hebrew understanding of a man as essentially the sum of his acts and accomplishments, surviving therefore only in his achievements and his children; this return has been rendered impossible not by a belief in man's personal immortality so much as by the suspicion which psychiatric observations have cast on the reliability of a man's overt acts as a guide to his real personality. In such a situation, it is not easy to give an account of the nature of

¹In addition to works cited specifically in this chapter, see Lee, R.S.: Freud and Christianity (New York, Wyn, 1949), Mollegen, A.T. et al.: Christianity and Psychoanalysis (Washington, 1952) as well as a brief article, Walters, C.S.: "Have Psychiatry and Religion Reached a Truce?" (Christianity Today, X:1, October 8, 1965)

God, but this chapter is an attempt to suggest the lines on which such an account might be given.

The Shattering of an Illusion

Your work should soon yield a typical result, as the general lines of religious thinking are laid down in advance in the family. God is the equivalent to father, the Madonna is the mother, and the patient himself is no other than Christ. (Freud to Pfister, March 1909)¹

Freud made quite substantial use of religion for the purpose of acquiring a better understanding of the human personality. Totem and Taboo, his excursion into anthropology, was devoted to an examination of the customs of primitive tribes with a view to learning the fundamental psychic mechanisms which bind humanity together, and the publication about ten years later of The Future of an Illusion was no more than the expression in public, late in his life, of his "completely negative attitude towards religion in any form, however attenuated";² The position which he takes there is expanded with particular reference to the Judaeo-Christian tradition in Moses and Monotheism, and repeated with almost no change in his lecture entitled "A Philosophy of Life", the thirty-fifth of his New Introductory Lectures in Psychoanalysis.³

¹Freud, S. & Pfister, O.: Psychoanalysis and Faith: Correspondence (ed. Meng, H. & Freud, E., New York, Basic Books, 1963)

²ibid. p. 110.

³Freud, S.: Totem and Taboo (New York, Moffatt, 1918), The Future of an Illusion (Edinburgh, R. & R. Clark, 1928),

This is not the place for a detailed criticism either of Freud's anthropological generalizations or of his historical criticism of the bible narrative, but his psychiatric evaluation of the development of the idea of God must be described because it can make a fundamental contribution to our understanding of the idea of God as expressed in the Christian tradition.

To him, religion is an illusion: that is not the same as an error, and indeed the claims of religion could still be true even if religion is, as Freud says, an illusion. An illusion in his terms is any idea which has its roots in a wish. In this case, human helplessness against the ordeals of life leads to the creation of other emotional ideals with which to counteract pressures we find intolerable. These ideals are generated by the culture and passed on to the individual members. Freud examines the process by which these cultural ideals are formed in some detail, pointing out that in general the ideals of any culture are "modelled on the first achievements that the co-operation of internal ability and external circumstances made possible, and ... these first achievements are merely held fast by the ideal as examples to be followed."¹ This process has the incidental advantage that, since the

[from previous page] Moses and Monotheism (London, Hogarth Press 1951), New Introductory Lectures in Psychoanalysis (New York, Norton, 1933)

¹The Future of an Illusion, pp.21-22.

satisfaction which it provides is predominantly narcissistic (it is essentially a reflection by a culture on itself), it can be embraced by both the privileged and under-privileged members of the society, ~~the~~ latter being glad to have a group membership which permits them to despise outsiders.¹

However, as Freud is the first to recognize, this theory only accounts for the evolution of religious ideas in general, and not for the Judaeo-Christian religion in particular (or, for that matter, for any brand of monotheism). The origins of this particular world-view Freud sees in the infantile experience of helplessness, which results in very strong feelings towards the father figure; he is seen both as protector of the helpless infant and as powerful judge, punishing the infant for his misbehaviour, the most prominent type of which is the attempt on the son's part to steal the affection of the mother. The discovery, as the child grows older, that the father is not adequate as protector nor infallible as judge leads to the rebellion of the son against the father. However, the problem of human helplessness is not resolved by this rebellion; indeed it is heightened. The result is the creation in the mind of the child of a readiness to accept the existence of an ideal super-father who fulfils all the functions which belonged to

¹ibid. p.22. This view echoes Marx' famous adage about religion's being the "opium of the people" in Marx, K: "Introduction to Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," in Marx, K. & Engels, F.: On Religion (Moscow, Foreign Language Publishing House, 1955). For Marx, however, this feature of religion is no "incidental" advantage.

the human father without failures and faults. In Moses and Monotheism, Freud endeavours to show the history of the Jewish people and their religious ideals as the re-enactment on a tribal scale of the son's rebellion against his father (in this case, the father being their Egyptian overlords), and the eventual substitution of Jahweh in order to fill the gap left by the rebellion.

It would doubtless be possible, in view of the account of Israel's history given in chapter two of this thesis, to raise a number of questions about Freud's account. However it is not my purpose here to 'defend' Christianity against this 'attack', but rather to see what can be learnt from Freud's remarks about our understanding of God as personal. Freud seems to give moderate approval to this aim when he says:

[My theory] does not precisely imply a refutation of religion, but it is a necessary rounding off of our knowledge about it, and, at least on one point, it actually contradicts it, for religion lays claim to a divine origin. This claim, to be sure, is not false if our interpretation of God is accepted.¹ (New Introductory Lectures, p.229)

As I have said, there are many questions about matters of detail in Freud's biblical history and anthropology, but I wish nonetheless to suggest that accepting Freud's interpretation is by no means incompatible with accepting the truth of Christianity; indeed as we shall see later on, it provides us with some much needed insight into the nature of Christianity's God. In the end, I come out disagreeing with Freud when he says of

religious belief in general:

It cannot achieve its end. Its doctrines carry with them the stamp of the times in which they originated, the ignorant childhood days of the human race. Its consolations deserve no trust. Experience teaches us that the world is not a nursery. ... If one attempts to assign to religion its place in man's evolution, it seems not so much to be a lasting acquisition, as a parallel neurosis which the civilized man must pass through on his way to maturity. (ibid. pp.229-230)

My disagreement arises, however, because I am suspicious of Freud's "maturity" and not because I am frightened by his analysis of religion. To ~~his~~ God, the father-substitute and fulfilment of the infantile wishes of humanity, we shall return later, after looking for a moment at the views of C. G. Jung, who has generally been looked to as the psychiatric saviour of religious faith.

The Retreat to Mysticism

Religion is ... a careful and scrupulous observation of what Rudolf Otto aptly termed the "numinous" that is, a dynamic existence or effect, not caused by an arbitrary act of the will. On the contrary, it seizes and controls the human subject, which is always rather its victim than its creator. (Psychology and Religion, p.4)¹

To read much of Jung's writings is to immerse oneself in a type of thinking which is at first sight as much mystical as psychological, as much religious as scientific. The pages of

¹Jung, C.G.: Psychology and Religion (New Haven, Yale, University Press, 1934)

Memories, Dreams and Reflections,¹ Jung's autobiography, are a mixture of narration and reflection, of medical discovery and self-discovery, and the whole book is pervaded by a profoundly religious atmosphere. This has led many to suppose that in Jung can be found a friend of religion to counter the attacks of Freud; but as Fromm points out in his book Psychoanalysis and Religion² this is a very great over-simplification.

The difficulty lies in Jung's highly relative view of truth, and therefore of God. As can be seen from the definition of religion quoted above, and from the rest of Psychoanalysis and Religion, he is concerned with religion as a self-authenticating experience. God, for Jung, is the all-controlling unconscious. He is aware that this view makes him unable to cope with the claim made by many religions to be true; his only way out of this difficulty is to refer to the general cultural acceptance of religion as being its objective validation, but in the face of Freud's contention that religion is a cultural neurosis, and of the fact of many recorded occurrences of mass-delusion, this argument cannot be very psychologically compelling even if it were logically sound.

Even, however, if we are disinclined to accept the subjectivism which inevitably results from the identification of

¹Jung, C.G.: Memories, Dreams and Reflections (New York, Pantheon Books, 1951)

²Fromm, E.: Psychoanalysis and Religion (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1950)

God with the unconscious, and of the knowledge of God with mystical experience, Jung can still teach us something of what it ~~means~~ to speak of God as "he" rather than "it". Freud's answer had left something to be desired:

Nothing can be made of impersonal forces and fates: they remain eternally remote. But if the elements have passions that rage like those in our own souls, if death itself is not something spontaneous, but the violent act of an evil Will, if everywhere in nature we have about us beings who resemble those of our own environment, then indeed we can breathe freely, we can feel at home in the face of the supernatural, and we can deal psychically with our frantic anxiety. (Future of an Illusion, pp.28-29)

Plausible as this may seem, it needs considerable qualification. The Babylonian myth of creation, Enuma Elish, which we discussed in the second chapter, served well to articulate the fears of a primitive nation in the face of the constant danger of death by flood, but it hardly seems to have alleviated them at all: Tiamat as a person is no less terrifying than the Euphrates in flood.

Jung finds the origin of the personal gods in the mysteriousness of primitive man's environment, not because personification removes mystery, but precisely because it expresses it as no other idiom can. Personality is ultimate mystery. So we read the story of the seven-year-old Jung sitting on a stone and puzzling about who is sitting on whom,¹ and the more he puzzles the more personal the stone becomes.

¹Memories, Dreams and Reflections, p.20.

Thirty years later, when he stands on the stone again, his life has lost the mysterious, personal quality; yet the childhood fantasy pulls him back, and he finds it hard to return to the world. This of course is Freud's point about religion: it is a childhood fantasy, withdrawing us from the real world, which is not a nursery. But the real root of the personal stone which pulls us back is the sense of mystery which is the sense of personhood. The regret of many people that in a technological age our society is becoming depersonalized is the same phenomenon. I am not, of course, giving my support to the "back to the good old days" movement, but the issue is rather whether ultimately life is not a personal matter. It may be childish to have a relationship with a stone, for we have progressed beyond the animism of our forbears to the monotheistic religion which allows us to relate, at the mystical level, with only one God. Shall we now go one step further and say that there is not an ultimately personal reality behind the material realities which are fast becoming depersonalized? The issue is perhaps not whether we shall, but whether we can without losing touch with reality, drifting on a sea of objects; whether indeed the truth is not borne in on us under the guise of a "cultural neurosis".

Jung's insight in this regard is encapsulated in the two sentences from Psychology and Religion with which this section began: the first refers to the scrupulous attention paid

to mystery, and the second to the inescapable force of revelation. It is not the same, to observe an object and to know God. For in the process of knowing God, there comes at the same time the sense of mystery, that is the sense that God is ultimately unknowable, and the twin sense of revelation, the knowledge that the discovery of God is encounter; to the believer in God, the deity is not like some sub-atomic particle about which we may be certain today and uncertain tomorrow; at any moment, the believer is committed.

It is that experience which elucidates in yet another way the persistent assertion of religious people that their God is personal; it is the feature which we discerned in our epistemological quest in the last chapter, called in theology the doctrine of revelation. Now we discover that it is at bottom a personal experience of encounter, followed by commitment, which can be compared only to the experience of knowing another person. If we have found in Freud the nature of the personal God, and his psychic origin in the fantasy world of the human child, then we have seen in Jung the appearance of this process to the eye of faith: if it is an idealised father who is resurrected by a childish imagination we cannot kill, it can also be described as the self-revelation of a Father to his children, in personal encounter. What we must now see is how we can speak in psychological terms about God's relation to the observable world, which we discussed at the conclusion of the last chapter.

The Peeling of the Onion

Think well, and you will see that there is nothing you can call the "I". As you peel an onion, there is always another layer, but you never reach the kernel. So when you analyse the ego, it disappears completely.
(Shri Ramakrishna)¹

The person, whatever it be, can only be manifested by expressing itself; and expression means a personage.
(Meaning of Persons, p.73)

As Paul Tournier draws on his experience with patients in order to write The Meaning of Persons, he grapples constantly with the elusive question of the whereabouts of the person in the tangled reality of existence. There is no problem in dismissing the personage: we all know we are not the image we present in the superficial encounters of professional or social life.² So, one by one, we commence the removal of the envelopes, the prying open of the personages, the peeling of the onion, only to find, whether in introspection or in therapy, that the quest is futile. The "I" is not hiding in a wrapping of several blankets. It has been said that "Life is a game of hide-and-seek, in which we all pretend to hide."³ It is im-

¹From 'Message Actuel de l'Inde' in Les Cahiers de Sud, quoted in Tournier, Paul: The Meaning of Persons (New York, Harpers, 1957) p.71.

²For a most entertaining and instructive account of our use of personages to conceal our person, see Berne, Eric: Games People Play (New York, Grove Press, 1964).

³The Meaning of Persons, p.142.

possible really to hide, for the same reasons that it is impossible really to seek, because the personage and the person are inextricably bound together. If psychiatry's greatest initial contribution to our self-understanding was to show that the personages of our overt behaviour were not the real person, that underneath the 'person who acts' there is the 'person who is', then it has also shown that there can be no person without a personage, no being without action. It is one thing to examine the onion, one thing to remove the layers that are dead and rotten, to expose the layers which previously we had not known were there; but to take the layers all away, to continue unceasingly to peel, that is to do quite another thing - namely to destroy.

God is personal in the sense that this is also true of him. Pantheism, which we mentioned briefly in the last chapter in connection with Ryle's view of mind (p.94), is the identification of God just with the manifestations of his work in creation and history. This cheapening of the divine personality has always encountered resistance from Christians, in their insistence that God is neither dependent on nor the same as the created universe. The opposite danger, which we also saw in the last chapter, appears again from the perspective of the psychiatrists: there is no access to God by means of some superior and esoteric knowledge, independently of the manifestations of God's activity, God's personages, in the world. To

attempt this, to seek to be united with the Godhead unencumbered by the signs of his activity in the world, is in the end to deny the authenticity of those signs in a way that has always been repudiated by the mainstream of Christianity.

If then there is no essential kernel in the personality, of God or of man, which can be discovered deep inside layer on layer of encumbering personage, the question we have to ask of psychiatry is, where is true personalty to be found ? The lines along which that question is to be answered may be found in what Tournier has to say about personal relationship:

Indeed, what creates in me the consciousness of self is the consciousness I have of a not-self, of an external world from which firstly I distinguish myself, which next I observe objectively from without, and with which I enter into relationship. ...

Next, what creates in me consciousness of being a person is entering into relationship with another person, the "thou". Here again we find the double movement: the consciousness of being distinct from another person, and the possibility of entering into personal relationship with him. (Meaning of Persons, p.125)

The open relationship provides the only true access to the person. Yet even in the most open relationship we are not given a clear window into the other person, and the desire for an absolutely clear window into another human being is the neurotic desire to possess. We always "see through a glass, darkly" (I Cor. 13:12), and to see "face to face" is not granted to us.

There are two reasons for this: first there is the mystery, and then there are the obstacles, and it is most important

from a psychiatric and from a theological point of view that we distinguish them from each other. From the psychiatric point of view, there is mystery in the relationship between the healthiest of people; obstacles, on the other hand, are signs of sickness. Theologically speaking, there must always be mystery in the relationship between man and God; indeed the obstacles in the way of our relationship now, that which is called "sin", prevent us from seeing that mystery in its fullness, and entering into personal dialogue.

When the psychiatrist removes from the person in therapy the neurosis which has paralysed his life, he does not produce a person who is totally transparent to his fellow-men, or even to the psychiatrist himself; his task is simply to distil the mystery from the muddle. "It is impossible to step into the same stream twice", the Greeks observed, and what we know of the dynamics of the personality now makes it very clear that a person is a moving stream, responding to the form of the banks and yet going on under its own power: lower a camera into it to photograph the waters, and you will alter its course by the very act. We can remove insurmountable dams and smooth out impassable rapids, but you cannot possess a stream if it is to remain a stream. The person revealed in therapy is still expressed in a personage; the hope is only that it will be a personage to which the person is not enslaved, but which he has freely chosen. The person remains a mysterious stream, its

identity clearly present, yet one which can never be observed in its totality or possessed by another.

This is the truth of personality; and it is because some have discovered the same truth in their relationship to God that they have spoken of him in personal terms. They have found in that relationship numerous obstacles, to be sure. The relationship is often broken and constantly obstructed both by our personages and by his. By our own, because we cannot break free from one personage in order to be able to respond in freedom as persons; by his, because for the same reason we insist on fixating one of his personages, one sphere of his activity, and thus either ignoring the fulness of his identity, or refusing to accept that one of the personages in which he expresses himself is really authentic, really divine.

For these obstacles many remedies have been tried, from sacrifice and ritual purification on the one hand to techniques of contemplation and ascetic devotion on the other, but men have discovered, within the Christian tradition at any rate, that a creative initiative is required on the part of God. It is as though a graciousness is needed in life if we are to accommodate to it, if that relationship is to be mended, if the obstacles are to be removed: in this graciousness, Jesus Christ has been honoured as having played a unique part, but his was no solitary act. The fact that men have found themselves relating to their environment in a way they could only describe

as an encounter which is on the one hand obstructed and on the other hand being cleared, as it were, from the other side, this is part of the total picture which has led men to speak of God in personal terms, and to fail in every ~~attempt~~ attempt to reduce him to the level of an "it".

Yet in their sense that the obstructions were being cleared away, in their moments of truth when for a moment they seemed to see, then too they have been aware of God as person. Not only have they been able to compare these moments only to those moments of truth in marriage or friendship, in therapy or in love, when in the bright light that shines the obstacles momentarily disappear; they have furthermore been aware that what they see at that point is not a final, finite truth but rather an inexhaustible mystery. When Peter at the moment of the Lord's Transfiguration suggests the building of three tents for Jesus, Moses and Elijah (Matt. 17:4), he expresses the sense that what has been revealed to him is good and true but only a beginning: his appetite is whetted for the mystery. In the fact that his wish was not granted, we can see that this mystery is not to be possessed. Thus have men found in their relationship with God something which is broken and yet renewed, inexhaustibly mysterious, eluding possession, ultimately personal.

The Dynamics of God

Why does the bible speak so often of the 'living' God ?
Surely it is because the God it reveals to us is not the God

of the philosophers, outside time and space, the origin of all things or the sublimest possible conception of the mind. He is a living person, a person whose voice breaks in upon us, who himself intervenes, who acts, who suffers, who enters into history in Jesus Christ, who enters into men by the Holy Spirit. We recognize in him the characteristics of life that we studied earlier - not so much motionless essence as movement, impulsion, guiding force.

(Meaning of Persons, p.163)

We must now see where psychiatry has brought us. It is possible that "The Dynamics of God" sounds almost arrogant: shall we presume to psychoanalyse God? But the reader who objects thus to what we are doing has not only misunderstood this particular enterprise in theology, but he also has mistaken the nature of psychoanalysis. The analyst does not trespass on the holy ground of another's personality; we are not speaking of the moments when we categorize our fellow-men with pat phrases from semi-digested analytical text-books, preferring to deal with a label than with a person, or moulding a man into what we feel must be his neurosis, usually because it is really our own. The analyst at his best is one who simply reflects the voluntary self-revelation of his patient, and the theological enterprise is not, again at its best, any different. To grasp at the person of God, no matter how sanctified by tradition may be the labels we use, is always trespassing. However, if we are to understand what men have meant when they have called God personal, we shall have to take note of just what characteristics, what dynamics, they have believed him to have revealed to them; understanding these dynamics in the terms of psych-

iatry has seemed to me to be a fruitful attempt.

First of all the nettle of Freud has to be grasped.¹ The basic contention that religion is an illusion, a fulfilment of infantile wishes, has to be taken very seriously. Religious men will say, if they are sensible, not that this is a threat to their understanding of God's self-revelation of himself, but that this theory brings insight into how God reveals himself to men and furthermore greatly illuminates the content of that revelation. If man is made in the image of God, it is hardly surprising that man's understanding of God should be formed in the image of men, specifically in the image of the father figure of their early childhood. We cannot of course claim this mutual relationship of the image of God and of man as an argument for the truth of the revelation; as such it would be manifestly circular; but it does relate the psychiatric data to the theological affirmation in a way which can make clearer what there is to be affirmed or denied.

One of the things which is made a great deal clearer is the meaning of the term "Father" when applied to God; those who speak glibly of the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God ought to take notice that there is involved in the use of the term about God all the ambivalence Freud found in the

¹After the writing of this chapter, I became aware of an excellent work which does just that: Habgood, John: Truths in Tension; New Perspectives on Religion and Science (New York, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965), esp. chapter 13, "After Freud", pp.102-109.

development of the father-son relationship. It involves indeed a relationship of love, but to no less an extent also brings with it demands, and even an uncompromising jealousy on the father's part, matched sometimes by rebellion, fear and even hatred on the part of the son. All these are involved in our relationship with God, and the bible abounds with protestations of affection and loyalty on the one hand and anger and frustration at his apparent injustice on the other, as we saw in the second chapter. In calling God personal, and even Father, religious people mean to include in their understanding of his nature the whole range of human emotion as it reveals itself in our earliest and most basic relationship.

That, however, is not all they mean. They refer also to the personality of God in the sense that Jung and Tournier were seen to understand personality; the sense which involves mystery and revelation. The magnetic attraction of the numinosum, the mysterious, in a person, and the profound moment of truth, these come not as a moment of personal discovery of what was previously unknown, but rather as a moment of personal discovery by one who was previously unknown.

Yet it is just a moment. The images in the mirror are often distorted and always transitory, just as they are with other persons; that is another reason why God is called personal. There are, as in ~~all such~~ relationships, serious obstacles to be removed; and the most serious of them is our in-

sistence on the right of possession of the other: when God is accepted as person and treated with the respect due to the Person of persons, then the obstacles vanish and the pure mystery of the person appears: treat him as object, and his person vanishes in a mist which passes for mystery, and in obstacles of our own making.

So in the light of our knowledge of the dynamics of men, more appears of what it means to believe in a personal God. There is a price, of course. It is hard to surrender the Unchanging Essence of classical theology for the dynamic, changing person, in whom all our complex relationships, healthy and unhealthy, are seen to be involved. Nonetheless, the changing person has a certain constancy: it is the constancy not of essence but of abiding relationship. We ascribe constancy to persons, not because we find them always to be identical with the person we last knew them to be, but because there is progress, connection, experience in common: there is changing response on both sides, but there is response. It may be a comfort to be able to bank on the same response time after time, but in the end that comes to mean no response at all. It is from this paralysis of relationship that psychiatry saves men, and it is the other relationship, dynamic and free, which it has as its goal. To call God personal, and our encounter with him personal encounter, is to say two things: that he is not always the same; and that he is always the same God.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

We do not, therefore, seem to be very likely to get far by erasing the word "personal". If Christianity really said or believed that God is a person, finite, limited as we are, one person among all the others, then it would obviously be talking nonsense. But it doesn't. ("How Can God Be Personal ?", p.54)¹

Biblical studies, theology, philosophy, psychology - the last four chapters have taken us, albeit briefly, through very different parts of the human intellectual enterprise. Yet on the question of what it means to be personal, and by the same token therefore what it would mean for God to be personal, a remarkable unanimity appears.

This does not mean, for example, that we find ourselves in agreement with either Barth or Tillich; what it does mean is that the issues which emerged from their dialogue on this issue are precisely the issues which, it appears, were the concern of the biblical writers in describing their relationship with God, which emerge from the philosophical quest for an adequate criterion of personal identity, and which dominate the psychiatrists' understanding of personality. Out of this unanimity, it seems to me, there emerge a point of language and three points of substance which need re-iteration.

¹Barry, F.R. in Questioning Christian Faith, (New York, Seabury Press, 1966)

Symbol, Myth and Analogy

We have already remarked (see footnote 1 pp. 95-96) on the difficulties involved in the use of the word "analogy" to classify our language about God, but expressions like "myth" and "symbol" are not any better in that respect. The very possibility of language rests on ~~there~~ being certain likenesses among situations ~~which~~ are never identical. If I observe in Africa a certain tribal custom which I describe as a wedding, I am saying that it is an act analogous to those which I have observed at home, which begin in church and end in champagne; and I say that by using a word which is a symbol for those likenesses which I have observed between the two occasions (which might be contractual consequences, sociological function and so on). Causality has been called a "myth", because it is derived from occasions when object A very obviously pushes object B and thereby ~~causes~~ it to move, and expresses in a wider context our scientific world-view, our view of the relationship of events. Thus, in saying that the wedding in question "caused" widespread rejoicing, I am making use of a western myth.

But this is quite different from saying that the occasion in question was a wedding "in an analogous (or symbolic) sense" and that it "mythologically speaking" caused widespread rejoicing. Such expressions would imply that there were some "real" weddings (presumably our suburban variety) which this African

rite did not quite manage to match up to, and that whereas, to take an example, automobile collisions cause dents and scratches, weddings can only be said to cause rejoicing in some derivative sense. On the contrary, African weddings are real weddings, which really cause rejoicing.

It was clear enough in chapter 2 that to say as Barth does that language is used in its proper sense about God and in an analogous or symbolic sense about man, is to land oneself in linguistic and epistemological chaos. What is much more common and respectable is the position taken by Tillich and by Barry (whom I quote on page 122), that language is used in an analogous sense about God and in a real sense about man. I submit on the basis of the example just given of the wedding and of causation that this position involves an assumption, an apology, a confusion and an evasion, all of which are unwarranted. It assumes, first of all, that every word has a real application which can be clearly defined, and from which all other applications are derived: this assumption is common to Barth and Tillich, but is contrary to the way in which we use language. Language is used to point to common features, and there is no reason to think that the common features between the divine and the human are not real.

Secondly, to say that the wedding in Africa was a wedding "in an analogous sense" involves apology: it is saying that although the wedding was not really a wedding, the speaker

cannot think of anything better to say to describe it. The note of apology is quite absent from what the tradition has to say about God. The third point is that to say of all language used about God that it is analogous or symbolic must make it impossible to distinguish the real cases where the bible speaks in a mythical or poetic vein about God. For example, it would involve making absolutely no distinction between the forgiveness of God and his strong right arm, between God's judgment of his people and his walking in the garden in the cool of the evening. Yet it is perfectly possible to distinguish between the bible's use of poetic and mythical terms and its message about God's nature. Above all, to use the words "myth" and "analogy" about religious language in every case involves a neglect of the point made in chapter 2 about the distinction between Jahweh and the Babylonian deities. It simply is not the case that the God of Israel is a mythical representation of an element in nature, to be reinterpreted by our more sophisticated, scientific minds. The comparison of the bible with other ancient near-eastern literature makes it perfectly clear that the nature of Israel's God is by no means part of the mythological inheritance of its surrounding culture.

Finally, to categorize all religious language under the label of analogy or symbol evades the responsibility of saying reasonably precisely what is meant by it. It is often a way of saying, "Well - er - you know what I mean", and hoping. On the

other hand, if one is willing, and I have endeavoured to be in these pages, to say what one means by the words one is using about God, then the description of those words as "myths" or "analogies" adds nothing.

This is not to say that talking about God does not involve peculiar dangers and difficulties (so does talking about love, or sub-atomic particles for that matter). Barth points out that when we talk about God we talk theologice - that means that when we talk about God we talk about God. That means, among other things, that we are more likely to be wrong when we talk about how we spent the vacation, and indeed we must expect that language most commonly used about this world may get battered somewhat when it is used about God. That is what Barth is getting at (in a rather perverse way) when he says that language is properly used about God and only analogously about this world; theology, not exclusively but more than any other discipline, reveals the inadequacy of our concepts.

The willingness to examine the real meaning of theological concepts also reduces the importance of deciding exactly which of a number of cognate concepts to use. Thus there is, it seems to me, very little to choose between saying "God is a person", "God is person" and "God is personal". The indefinite article in the first expression allows for God's existence as an individual rather than an abstraction, which is vital to a proper understanding: on the other hand, it is open to some

misinterpretation, as the quotation from Barry at the start of this section makes all too clear. God is, indeed, not 'finite', limited as we are", and for that reason, "person" or "personal" are probably better than "a person". We can hardly encourage the idea that Christians hold God to have arms and legs, to sit in the sky and to take afternoon walks; but this was not a problem to the biblical writers, and I suspect, pace some anxious theologians, that it is not the real issue today. A much more important matter is at stake.

Revelation

The leading Protestant theologians of the twentieth century have, then, embraced as fact the philosophical contention that rationality is limited, that every man - will he, nill he - makes some ultimately irrational commitment; and they have used this contention to excuse rationally their own irrational commitment to Jesus Christ. Thereby, they have been able, in principle although not in practice to avoid loss of intellectual integrity. (Bartley, p.215)¹

We are back therefore to the position that either God does not exist or else He must establish His own existence. The believer is, in his heart of hearts, aware of this. For he knows that the debate is not about whether God exists but about how He can be shown to others or hung on to when the debate invades oneself. In reality there are no adequate reasons for God's existence. He is. The atheist also understands this. He does not believe. (Jenkins, p.110)²

There, indeed, is the real issue. From Bartley a non-

¹Bartley, W.W., III: The Retreat to Commitment (New York, Knopf, 1962).

²Jenkins, D.E.: Guide to the Debate about God (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1966).

Christian, a challenge comes to defend the rationality of our commitment without resort to the "tu quoque" argument, the specious insistence that we all make irrational commitments; from Jenkins, a Christian, comes a classic statement of the doctrine of revelation. Is Jenkins appealing to the very irrationality Bartley condemns ?

I have endeavoured to show that the commitment to God can be defended rationally, if we make use of the procedures involved in establishing the existence of other minds. The existence of other minds can never be proved, but that argument can be stood on its head: we accept the existence of other minds, and therefore we should accept the rationality of the procedures we use for establishing their existence if our definition of rationality is not to be self-defeating. If the procedures for the establishing of the existence of other minds are accepted as rational, then it ought to be possible to defend the rationality of belief in God's existence.

But what would this make of Jenkins' point ? What he is saying is that God's existence cannot be known unless God reveals himself. As we have seen in chapters 4 and 5, this is true also of other minds. So that to defend the rationality of belief in the existence of God by reference to the epistemology of other minds is not a persuasive device (let alone a compelling proof); it is implied by the most elementary aspect of the Christian doctrine of God, the doctrine of revelation.

Identity

Tillich traced the emergence of monotheism to the need for ultimacy; our study has revealed that there is more to it than that. The events of their life were conceived as the acts of the one God by the biblical writers because it was possible for them to see in those events just the kind of constancy which is found in persons. The poet Vergil also had a view of the events of Rome's history as part of a destiny: but his fatum was simply an impersonal Direction leading to the great Augustan empire; the followers of that Fate could have made nothing of the destruction of that empire. Only those whose God was personal enough to reveal and take a new direction could make sense of radical change.¹ It was precisely the greatness of the Hebrew prophets, that they could see in radical, apparently chaotic change the activity of the same God. Thus belief in God's personal action does not depend on the acceptance of a mythological world-view involving a supernatural being intervening in the natural order, but on the vision of a constancy amid change as only a person can reveal it.² This is the tension in the person which leads to the philosophical need to speak of mind as well as body, that dia-

¹The contrast between Vergil's impersonal fatum and the personal God of Christian faith will be expounded in the first chapter of Patterson, L.G.: God and History in Early Christian Thought, to be published shortly.

²see Bultmann, R.: Jesus Christ and Mythology (New York, Scribners, 1958) pp.60-85, "The Meaning of God as Acting."

lectic between old and new in behaviour and personality which meant for the psychiatrist that the person could not be enslaved by one personage nor captured in one instant. God is person because in the events of human existence is that direction which is never a line, that change which is never a clean break, in a word that personality we know in our fellow men.

Relationship

Nor is the consequence of that discovery in God any different ~~in~~ kind from the consequence of that discovery in our neighbour. Personality is inescapably a value word; to know a man is to have obligations, but it is even more than that. Men are known, and the biblical writers say God is known, in relationship, and to know a person, the person of a man or the person of God is inevitably to be related. The covenant expressed for the people of the bible the relationship between God's acts on their behalf and their resolution to obey him. For our time, the personality of God likewise gives reason to our response and urgency to our obedience. It is the personality of God revealed in his new covenant which is the basis of the all-important ~~conjunction~~ in Paul's exhortation: "I bid you therefore brethren by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice." (Rom. 12:1) We are not coerced by a force, but rather invited into a relationship by and with a personal God, who will be well pleased with our acceptance.

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